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72

NOVEMBER 2007

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FUTURE FOLK HUNTING ELECTRONIC WILDLIFE
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RICHIE KAWTIN

ALSO THIS ISSUE
FIVE DEEZ
MICHAEL
HWEY KAT
JONNY U
AND WHAT IS CIRCUIT
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LOOK FANTASTIK MIT SKI~GYMNASTIK

mit **Rosi Mittermaier**

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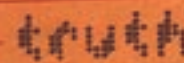
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ED'S RANT



Fernando Barillas/Guatemala

TECH NO?

2003 is fast becoming history. Autumn is upon us, and as the leaves fall and the days become shorter and darker, it's time for some long-view contemplation. I was planning on ranting at length about the absurdity of the Recording Industry Association of America's 261 lawsuits against music-file traders, the many flaws in the Association's arguments, and the way they're using independent labels as pawns (read Ras Records owner Gary Himelfarb's teary testimonial at www.cpwire.com/archive/2003/9/8/1377.asp) in their bid to maintain unfair music business practices that have robbed consumers for decades. Instead, let me just state the obvious: *the game has changed*.

The neat historical arrangement between electronics manufacturers such as Sony and Phillips and the (now only) four major labels is crumbling under the shifting landscape of new digital software and open-source networks. Instead of having to pay mid-dlemen and finance their inflated infrastructure (Britney Spears's private jet, etc.), people want—and can now get—direct access to their art. And according to writers like Peter DiCola, recorded music is destined to become a public good free from the strictures of the “free” market (check www.futureofmusic.org/articles/publicgood.cfm).

It's one of many examples of how shared-interest communities (which have spontaneously created businesses like KaZaA or craigslist) have sprung up with their own autonomous traditions, ones that aren't easily mass-duplicated at Best Buy. The cultural trend of micro-communities with macro interests is in its infancy. Life no longer imitates art—life now imitates and *mutates* technology. People are creating their own human versions of hubs off the nodes of larger social and physical networks.

You only have to look to the recent World Trade Organization meeting in Cancún, Mexico and the role technology played in the protests (from Indymedia.org collectives to flash-demonstrations planned via mobile phone) and subsequent media coverage (see www.newsreview.com/issues/sacto/2003-09-18/cover.asp for more). Expectations of economic justice and global equity are increasing, and their proponents are harnessing digital communication and distribution methods to achieve parity. I believe this trend will be as unstoppable as China's Yangtze River water now rushing through the proposed site of the controversial Three Gorges Dam.

Undeniably, business is down in the music industry. In my position at this publication I see that every day in every form. But the root causes of this decline are not as simplistic as the RIAA and anti-file trading entities make it out to be. In a sense, we're experiencing a convulsion of globalization, which has traveled from the North Atlantic Free Trade Association and other treaties on down to the average person—yes, right here in the US—making and trying to sell a CD. We all want our gas cheap (even if it means financing terrorism) and soymilk on every shelf (even if it undercuts farmers and laborers abroad). Black markets crop up in the areas of economic disparity and, *voila*, CDs and other media are pirated, downloaded and otherwise exploited.

So as *XLR8R* examines a slew of new electronic music technology and speaks with proponents of future thinking like Richie Hawtin, we should see it all within a greater shift that's happening in this era—one towards the empowerment of smaller, local entities as a direct response to the dehumanization wrought by multinational conglomerates. Can the RIAA stop that with a lawsuit? I don't think so; as one form of techno-bartering is thwarted, another will take its place. Where does this leave the arts? Back in the hands of the artists and the audience they seek to share it with. Art flows from free expression, and that's all people are asking for—to be free.

-Tomas, Editor

.BAZOOKA TOOTH. AESOP ROCK

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HEATH HIGHLIGHT



Heath K. Hignight was a founding member of the Young Republicans club, Broken Arrow High School, 1990. Then he went to college. Now he dons a bumper sticker that reads, "George W. Bush is a punk-ass chump," which goes over well now that he lives in Texas. He also makes a damned fine bar-b-que sauce—thick, tangy, and lots of bite. That's how he likes his music, too.

STACY MEYN



In past lives, Stacy Meyn was a library clerk, A/V tech, telecom specialist, music store manager/buyer and DJ/producer. An editor and expo coordinator for *Baltimore Resources Journal*, Stacy transitioned to web-maven for DoubleClicked Publications, and since 1994, she has operated her freelance writing business, Space Ltd. When not "web-bing" or writing, Stacy enjoys martial arts, tactical training, and working as a security supervisor for the USS

Hornet Museum, as well as at SFO, supervising explosive and hazmat detection systems.

MARGARET MURRAY



Margaret Murray cut her teeth musically in the avant-garde jazz worlds of New York and Amsterdam. She currently lives in St. Petersburg, FL, curating film festivals, including Cinema of Agitation for the Salvador Dali Museum. In addition to her legitimate work for museums and children's organizations, Margaret alternately terrorizes, and is terrorized by, local law enforcement agencies as

owner of Movies That Move, a roving, guerrilla drive-in featuring independent films, DJs and musicians. Margaret dreams of the day when artists make more money than musicians.

MARTIN TURENNE



After a glorious career in pro accountancy, Martin Turenne holstered his calculator in 2002 to try his hand at pro writing. Martin really digs music, but the only instrument he can play is his laptop, a rickety old first-generation IBM portable that weighs about a ton. From his home in Vancouver, BC, Martin writes for such fine publications as *XLR8R*, *URB* and *Resonance*. Recently, the Canadian's

grown himself a bad-ass beard, all the better to hide from a growing list of wronged and vengeful artists. Sure, the pen may be mightier than the sword, but Martin's not taking any chances.

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LETTERS

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DON'T HATE, REGULATE
When I started reading your letters section of issue 70 I thought I was reading *Maximum Rock and Roll* for a second. Holy shit!! How boring is your life when you're bitching about the gloss on the cover? And then people wanna talk about "played itself like a metaphor" and shit? Come on, don't get poetic on me now you simple bastard. Oh yeah, how is a layout "tech?" All these graphic design fuckers are pure comedy. You give these cats an exacto knife and they think it's some bizarre steak knife or something. Let me guess, you got a G5, some Urban Outfitter Dunks and some Diesel jeans, and now you're in a position to critique any printed matter? I'm not even that into *XLR8R*, but daaamn! People are nutty. Oh yeah, that saxophone player from the Rapture is on some bullshit. How you gonna go from some snaggletooth indie Encino Man and now you lookin' like Jonathan from *Who's the Boss?* Homie needs to holla at a toothbrush or some Orbit or something.
Dave Sandey

HAPPY CAMPER

Hi, I just wanted to say that I'm a happy subscriber to your magazine and that it kicks the shit out of all so-called electronic magazines. I can't even think of the other ones that are springing up, because I just

get yours and it's all I need. Your sampler CD this month especially kicked ass—I can't get enough of KID606 now, as well as Chris Clark who I was in the dark about. I make electronic music as well and find your gear reviews to be good/interesting especially for a magazine that doesn't have the instruments as its main focus. Just wanted to say great job and keep up the excellent work.
Eric Menzie

REZ FEST

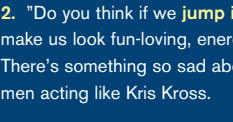
Dear XLR8R Staff/Managers/Editors (and all underpaid support staff doing your thing), I'm an Apache artist living and working in Arizona. I paint and travel to sell original art. You get used to driving long distances when living on the "rez". Recently, I drove down to Tempe to my favorite record store in hopes of buying some music, magazines and other supplies needed to spur my itinerant creativity. It's actually a four-hour round trip for me to go down and buy the latest Madlib or Roots CD. So, let's just say I support other artists too. I came across your issue with Madlib and Prefuse on the cover. Not only was this a good issue, it was covering one of my favorite artists and inspirations. Not to mention, it came with a FREE CD! I was like, 'Damn! I got to get this Stones Throw promo outta the bag without the checkout dude with black frame glasses noticing.' Sike! Jail time does not appeal to me at this juncture in my career. Anyways I of course bought the mag and was very happy. Went to the motel where I stay sometimes on these trips and for some strange reason, I couldn't find the promo Stones Throw CD. Almost cried after I turned the car and hotel inside out. Thought the cleaning girl might of took it but repented her of my accusatory stares and just went home.
Douglas Miles

BITTER BASTARD

Bitter Bastard's
10 Dumbest Photo Shoot Ideas



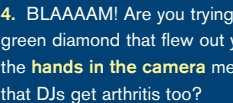
1. Oh, gentle techno producer who has probably never done anything bad or wrong or deviant in his life and got beat up for his lunch money. Come stand next to this **graffiti wall** so you can look hard and urban.



2. "Do you think if we **jump in the air** it will make us look fun-loving, energetic and fit?" There's something so sad about two grown men acting like Kris Kross.



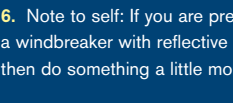
3. DJs never want to let you forget that they travel to exotic places on the daily, which is why they're always being photographed in the most boring places, like **airports, subway tunnels and train stations** in Japan (note haggard look from too much "caning it").



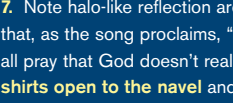
4. BLAAAAAM! Are you trying to catch a green diamond that flew out your nose or are the **hands in the camera** meant to show us that DJs get arthritis too?



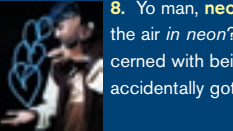
5. Where the nearing-midlife-crisis house producer wants the ravers to think that he's still trippy, so he goes to a children's amusement park and takes pictures with **papier mache mushrooms** ('Shrooms? Get it? *Mushroom Jazz?* Shrooms!!! Wheeee!)



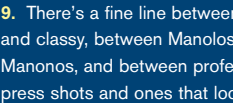
6. Note to self: If you are pretty average looking and are going to wear a windbreaker with reflective piping from the Gap Fall 1996 collection, then do something a little more adventurous than **sitting on a bench**.



7. Note halo-like reflection around head, signifying that, as the song proclaims, "God Is A DJ." Let's us all pray that God doesn't really wear **gimmicky shirts open to the navel** and Birkenstocks.



8. Yo man, **neon?** Painting hearts in the air *in neon?* For someone so concerned with being macho, you just accidentally got on the fruity bus.



9. There's a fine line between ashy and classy, between Manolos and Manonos, and between professional press shots and ones that look like **your little brother did them with a disposable camera** and got them developed at Wal-Mart. But hey, Destiny's Child once looked like they bought their matching outfits at the flea market too.



10. Who wants to listen to music made by **this man?**



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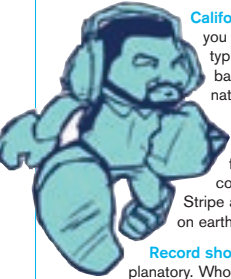
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California roll The only sushi you can't get in Japan. I'm the typical J-A that only likes the bastardized versions of the native shit.

Red snapper Shake it in a bag with some egg, flour, spices and organic commmeal. **Serve** with a Red Stripe and some lemon. Heaven on earth, Doggie.

Record shopping Self-ex-fucking-planetary. Who feels it knows.

Home Depot My DIY streak is a mile wide. It ain't just limited to my label.

Old-school get-togethers Get all the old homies in the room together and let the old jokes tell themselves.

New shoes You kidding? I could be homeless with a shiny new pair of kicks and still get a date for the prom.

Entertaining If I don't get on stage at least once a week, I become quite the asshole. I might have to sneak into Justice League's* closed-ass. *(an SF nightclub—Ed)

Cappin', a.k.a. the dozens Battle-rappin' at it's finest. Requires just as much creativity, these days it probably gets a better response, and best of all, the shit is free.

Working hard The only way to do it. Good for the soul.

Applause I'm a hop-head when it comes to the crowd. See "Entertaining", above.

For more on Lyrics Born, go to page 62.

ENTER XLR8R'S LUCKY SEVEN CONTEST

Tired of being the best bedroom producer that no one has ever heard of? Well, stop your moaning and start twiddling. The directions of this contest are crystal clear: Hit up www.acidplanet.com. Download acapellas of Audessey's "The Gusto" and J-Live and Wordsworth's "Bosoms"—two fantastic hip-hop jams from the extensive catalogue of NYC's 7Heads label. Then use Sonic Foundry's program Acid—either your home copy or a free download—to remix the track. Upload the remixes to the site or send them to the address listed below. Reps will choose the eleven best entries, who will win wicked new music from 7Heads, cutting-edge Acid software, and classy clubwear from hip-hop clothiers Davoucci.



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10 Runners-Up will receive 7Heads's *No Edge Ups* in South Africa compilation, two sound loop libraries and a Davoucci t-shirt.

All entries must be uploaded to the site (www.acidplanet.com) or mailed to XLR8R Lucky Seven Contest, 70 Washington St., Suite 407, Brooklyn, NY 11201 no later than December 31, 2003.

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PREFIX

ROLL DEEP'S WILEY KAT BLANKETS THE TUNDRA OF UK GARAGE WITH A BLIZZARD OF EXPERIMENTAL BEATS.

"I call my music Eskibeat," maintains Wiley Kat of his abstracted, mutant music, which often seems to owe more to rapid-fire computer games than the UK garage that spawned it. "It's not garage, it's not hip-hop—it's Eskibeat. I want people to hear my sound and say 'That's an Eskibeat!' I want them to know that it's Wiley's sound."

Over the last couple of years, the Roll Deep Crew-aligned producer/MC has been churning out a slew of weird and strangely physical tracks thematically linked by a penchant for the cold, the wintry, and the glacial. Track titles like "Igloo", "Frostbite," "Freeze" and "Eskimo" have made his state of mind and music-making aesthetic explicit. "I wasn't making sad songs but I was cold inside," explains Kat. "I've got a few summer songs, but winter's really my time. I love winter because it's cold outside and not everyone's about. I get around easier in winter. In the summer, when it's all hot, I can't be bothered to move."

Motivation doesn't really seem to be a problem, however. Often recording a track a day, Wiley deliberately flooded the market this year with white labels bearing his *Thundercats*-derived name. He reckons around 70,000 twelves have been shifted from his car boot. "I've brought loads out," he says. "I went into the studio and just churned out the beats for a while. I was selling units, but the buzz was really about 'Who is Wiley? Why has he got a tune out every week? How come he's doing this?' People might not have liked the tunes, but it was about the buzz."

Wiley tracks like "Eskimo" wouldn't sound out of place on Rephlex or Razor X, while "Blizzard" has even been compared to Piano Magic. Not surprisingly, these alien sounds haven't always sat easily with the UK garage godfathers, which is why Wiley, like fellow crewmember Dizzee Rascal, distances himself from the genre. "We're not dissing garage 'cos garage is what we came out of," he explains. "But while we were doing what we were doing, the garage scene and the garage people weren't accepting it. They weren't accepting our beats. We were making atypical music and the garage heads were like [incredulously], 'What's *that*? What are they making?' But we like it! Because they don't like it, does that mean we have to change? Does that mean we have to fuck with what we're doing?"

Wiley's as-yet-untitled album is forthcoming on XL Records.

www.rolldeepcrew.co.uk

AUDIOFILE:
WILEY KAT

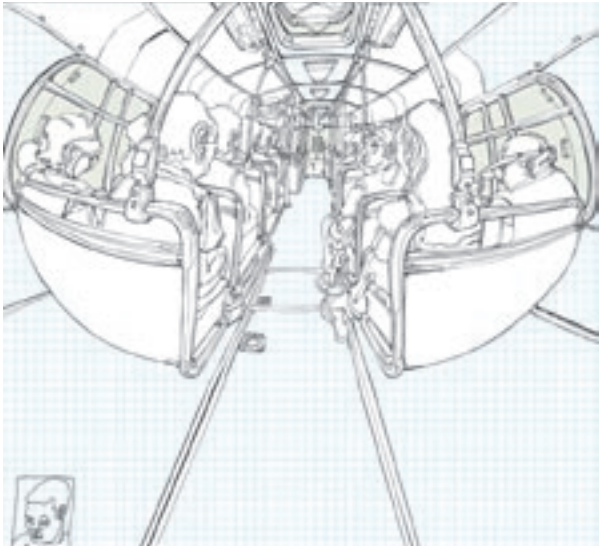
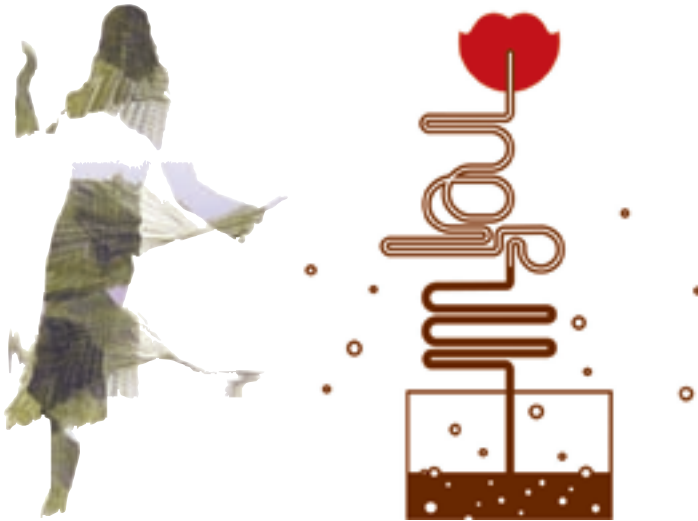


FILLING STATION

Refill Magazine reads sort of like a vanity project for Sydney-based designers Kevin Vo and Luca Ionescu and friends, but vain should always look this good. Inside *Refill*'s beautifully matte pages, distinctive pop from Phunk Studio rubs noses with the technicolor dreamcoat of Rinzen and Demo's post-modern glitch does a lurid lap dance for a vice-filled Skull Dezain. The first issue relies a bit

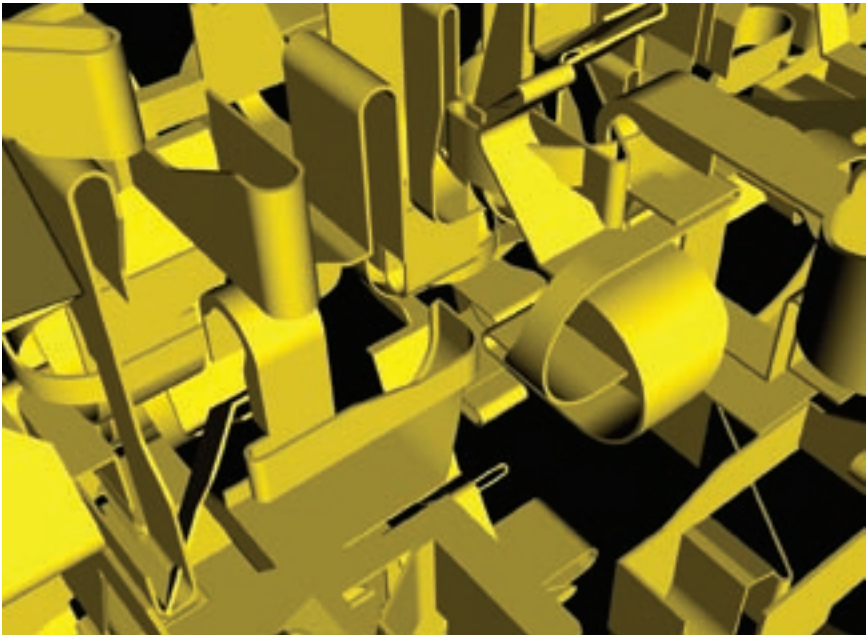
too heavily on the usual suspects—Obey, Angela Boatwright and—Futura 2000, anyone? But it remains to be seen if it will branch out into breaking new designers. The project, which looks and feels more like a book than a “rag,” is intended to be a collector’s item; issues are produced in 10,000 runs and sold through a hipster boutique near you. *Tyra Bangs*

www.refillmag.com



Artwork featured in *Refill Mag* by Tommy Penton (top left and bottom right) and Rinzen (top right and bottom left)

Digital works by Hana Hilerova (top) and Ryan Molloy



DIGITAL DISPLAY

Responsible for some of the most happening hobnobbing opportunities for digiphiles this side of Ars Electronica, the **Austin Museum of Digital Art** was originally conceived as a physical space where digital art could be viewed by the public in ways not possible with, say, a website.

AMODA has done without that brick-and-mortar home so far. Founded by University of Texas grad student Harold Chaput in 1997, the non-profit offers a moveable feast of lectures, youth programs, exhibitions and performance-based concerts. Its mission is lofty and large: “to engage the public, educate the community and support artists in the creation, understanding and appreciation of digital art.”

So far, it's the digital showcases that have picked up the most momentum. “They were trying a bunch of different things and this was one that worked really well,” says Digital Showcase Director Todd Simmons of the events he pulls together every other month in various Austin night-clubs. “The organization has changed a little bit, but the underlying goals are still the same.”

AMODA defines digital art as anything using digital technology as the product, process or subject. Showcasing video, interactive, and web- or computer-based arts like video games and Flash pieces, the organization seeks to both legitimize and raise the bar for these crafts. In addition to the visual arts, music is a significant showcase draw. AMODA list of performers reads like a who's who of experimental artists, from locals like Nautilus, Proem and Stars as Eyes, to international names like Lesser, DAT Politics, Max Tundra, Tomas Jirku, Sutekh, Murcof and members of m'um.

AMODA has gone far in breaking down the barriers between bedroom studios and the local nightlife, helping to create a bolder, younger arts scene and inspiring more locals to produce electronic music. “Maybe [artists] were doing it before,” Simmons says. “But they weren't necessarily doing it on a level where they wanted to take it out and play it in front of people.” *Liz Cordingley*

To volunteer, donate, or respond to AMODA's Call for Art, visit www.amoda.org.



BUCKLE UP

(clockwise from above): Toy Machine (available at www.toymachine.com); Killah (\$60), Hurley (\$35), Paul Frank (\$36),

Obey (\$39) (all available at Villains, SF); Grn Apple (\$30; available at Reed Space, NYC); Silas (\$78; available at Union, LA); Zoo York (\$14; available at True, SF); X-Girl (\$91; available at X-Girl, NYC and LA)



TEENAGED TECHNOIST GETS CRUNK LIKE THAT.

Every time Jimmy Edgar looks in the mirror, he sees someone new. Just 19 years of age, the Detroit native has developed over a half-dozen aliases, one for each of the identities that comprise his being. “It’s like I’m literally split up into several distinct personalities,” offers the soft-spoken producer. “I like to organize it in my head as if I’m actually a bunch of different people.”

As Kristuit Salu, the teenaged technoist indulges his secretive side, issuing click-driven tracks wrapped in frayed inharmonic gauze. When Edgar is feeling extroverted, he dons the Morris Nightingale moniker and gives birth to razor-studded rhythms for the glitch-hop massive.

Where 2002’s *My Mines I* found the producer alternating between Salu and Nightingale, this year’s %20 introduces Edgar’s new Michaux moniker. Michaux is easily the teenager’s geekiest guise to date: %20 was composed using software designed by Edgar to emulate his fractured sense of self. “For that record, I actually wrote viruses and glitches into the software,” he enthuses. “I always want to make my creative environment as personal as possible, and in this case, I wanted to account for all those personalities in my head and program myself into the software.”

On the imminent *Access Rhythm* EP, his debut for Warp Records, the producer will introduce yet another new name to the game: his own. Working as Jimmy Edgar, the beatmaker merges all of his interests, bringing his strict programmatic methods to bear on glossy R&B-inspired tunes. While a swarm of laptop artists have recently jumped on the booty bandwagon—we see you, Kit Clayton—few can match Edgar’s rhythmic dynamism, a skill he developed as a youthful jazz musician. “Rhythm has always come naturally to me,” he claims. “Since I grew up playing drums, I obviously have an ear for drum sounds, and I’m able to make them be really hard-hitting. That’s not something that all electronic artists have going for them.”

A sneak preview of Edgar’s forthcoming full-length (*Bounce, Make, Model*) demonstrates the producer’s mastery of music’s low-end theories. The nastily hiccupping “I Wanna Be Your STD” sounds like crunk gone glitch while “LB LB Detroit” is a smooove slow jam for horn-rimmed hedonists from coast to coast. Like a loving homage to Timbaland, Edgar’s newest project proves that no matter how many masks he dons, he will never lose sight of one fact: when the ass moves, the head must follow.⌋

Access Rhythm EP is out in November on Warp Records; Bounce, Make, Model will be out in Spring 2004. www.kristuitsalu.com, www.warprecords.com

AUDIOFILE:
JIMMY EDGAR

“Truly is a beautiful action movie...”
Ain't It Cool News

“A lean, hard-driving story and solemn atmosphere make *The Princess Blade*... stand way above the pack.”
Hollywood Reporter

“Bleakly compelling... With its stylized, near-surreal comic-book look and roots, ‘*The Princess Blade*’ has all the makings of a cult film”
Kevin Thomas, Los Angeles Times

The martial arts motion picture event of the year arrives on DVD November 18th.

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IT'S A SYN

“We are deeply offended by this question,” counters Adam Rajceвич, half of the clothing line **Syndrome**, to my assertion that their home base of Chicago might not follow suit after Paris, New York, London, Tokyo, et al. in regards to fashion. “We got fashion here... it’s just not great,” he says.

You’d never know it, as Adam, along with partner Luke Cho, seems hellbent on correcting the Windy City’s bumbling Jim Belushi style chasm. Ivy League classics such as pinstriped button downs and herringbone hunting jackets are fused with graphics from modern day design wizards Cody Hudson (Struggle Inc.) and Justin Fine (Demo). Most would rest on this alone, but Syndrome pushes it one step further with experimental and off-center printing techniques, the kind that get silk screeners’ squeegees all in a twist. Large-scale prints trample over crew jersey zippers while hand-drawn type bleeds from the edge of prep school blazers—had Holden Caulfield taken his frustrations out on a Mac he might have arrived at something like this.

For the most part, maneuvering through unconventional printing territory is the most trouble any streetwear line may hope to see, but it’s all been downhill since Syndrome’s rocky welcome two years ago. “Just after 9/11, we were making a sales trip to New York with two garment bags,” says Rajceвич. “At the Chicago airport, as we were checking in, we were pulled aside by FBI agents. They claimed we were transporting bags full of money and, after questioning us for an hour in the hot airport security office, they found out we are a bunch of nobodies just trying to smuggle our spring collection to New York. They were serious! It was some scary shit!” *David J Weissberg*

Syndrome is available at Memes (NYC), Fred Segal (LA), Untitled (Chicago) and, for those in between, www.turntablelab.com.



KANZLERAMT KNOCKS OUT DANCE-FLOORS WITH PUNCHY TECHNO.

Kanzleramt, one of Germany’s fastest-rising techno labels, turns ten years old this January, but it’s only been within the last two years that the imprint, founded by elder Deutsch techno maven Heiko Laux, has begun to burn up techno and trance playlists alike. From Dave Clarke and Andrea Parker to Sven Väth and Miss Kittin, the label’s got hot momentum among DJs who prefer melodic, punchy techno.

Kanzleramt’s success could well be attributed to what Laux calls “songmode” techno. “Songmode is a term I use for fully arranged and edited songs,” he says, noting that it’s the opposite of just slapping down sounds in the hopes of having a lucky accident. “Everything in the song is thought out before it’s done and has to fit in with the idea.”

It took some time for the label to develop their painstakingly crafted sound. Manager Ronny Krieger remembers the first time he heard a Kanzleramt twelve—and wasn’t too impressed. “It was awful trance bullshit with the sound quality of a beginner’s release,” he jibes. “The main evolution since then is the production quality. If you listen to later records you won’t find any differences between a well-produced pop record and a Kanzleramt record, which is very unusual in the whole techno/dance scene.”

Krieger is quick to correct any notion that Kanzleramt would ever make bubblegum dance music. “[We] want to have a good sound in the clubs with a big punch and loudness, but it should sound extremely well on your hi-fi system at home too. It’s possible to take care of both.”

Proof of this concept is in the pudding. Johannes Heil’s 1998 album *Reality to Midi*,

a favorite among German DJs, sold over 20,000 copies; other releases have moved equally astonishing numbers, which is remarkable considering the label rarely advertises.

So how will Kanzleramt celebrate its first decade? A first-ever twelve-inch compilation will mark both the anniversary and 100th release, featuring new tracks by the imprint’s principle artists: Laux, Heil, Alexander Kowalski, and Diego Hostettler.

“I would describe Kanzleramt as a high quality deep electronic music label,” says Hostettler. But for Kowalski, Kanzleramt’s greatest strength is the creative camaraderie between the artists. “Before I was on the label I was a big fan,” he enthuses. “Now I’m a part of the family [and] that’s a really good feeling. I never wanna leave!”

www.kanzleramt.com

VIDEO GAMES



els on the first try! Once you’ve conquered the computer, get your buddies to come around for some one-on-one action. Start slow. Get their confidence up and then start pounding on those buttons again and really kick their fucking ass right out of left field. One very good, yet extremely annoying, tip is to repeat a single, simple move like a kick to the leg. You’ll get your opponent in a situation that they can’t escape, where you’re just chipping away at their health. Your buddy that you’ve invited over for a friendly night of game playing will leave in a huff, feeling inferior. Elsewhere in the game, the animation of the characters is amazing, but the arenas are a little boring. Still, this is definitely a worthwhile sequel to one of the best fighting titles out there. *Andrew Smith*

www.namco.com

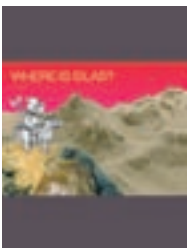
IN THE FUTURE:
MANITOBA



In the future there’ll be these bugged out dudes in green velour selling chili dogs on rollerskates and everyone will be like, ‘Why the fuck are these boogs sellin’ chili dogs? We never had that when we were young.’ Serious.



Label founder Heiko Laux



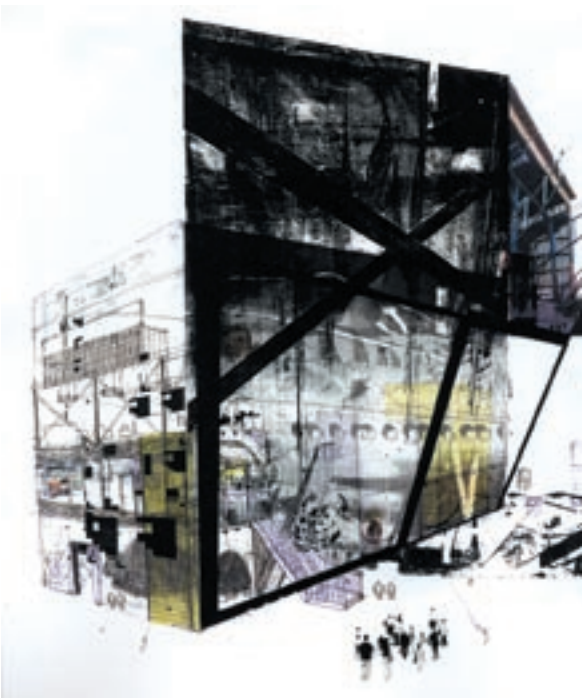
Where Is Silas? (softcover; Laurence King, £35) is supposedly inspired by the life of Silas Holmes, an enigmatic character about whom there are no direct documents, records or photographs—only hearsay. Holmes is ostensibly the stimulus for graphic designer James Jarvis and fashion photographer Clare Shilland, who have curated a clothing line (Silas) and this odd book around his life and times. Jarris contributes a series of cartoons based on a fictional 12th century ballad about Silas, while Shilland has compiled a series of self-portraits revealing parts of her body in public places. Other images in this sometimes wanky and indulgent, but nonetheless sought after, collection include a hanging horse, faux crime reports and naturist-friendly furniture. *David Hemingway*
www.laurenceking.co.uk

PRETTY PICTURES

Serving up plenty of inspiration, the winter bookmobile burns rubber on its way into town, carrying tomes featuring the latest and greatest in the wonderland known as graphic design.



Our world is a strange and jarring place, and Neasden knows it. Join the British design collective (and erstwhile *XLR8R* illustrators) as they conduct Scotch tape sonatas and chicken scratch symphonies. Plying their trade in glue, burnt-out marker and the errata of everyday life, *Neasden Control Centre* (softcover; DGV, \$44) mixes influences from liver spots to Basquiat to Stanley Kubrick while redefining post-millennial freak/psych-out. Best viewed after four cups of coffee. *Tyra Bangs*
www.neasdencontrolcentre.com



Throw-up As Cultural Subtext. Advancement of the Tag. Urban Fonts. Classes from a graffiti university of the future or simply topics addressed in *Urban Calligraphy and Beyond* (hardcover; DGV, \$45)? In this book, editors Markus Mai and Arthur

Remke attempt to deconstruct popular urban letterforms in the language of a college professor to mixed effect. Better to look at the pictures, which show the evolution of the throw-up from sketchbook concept into tool for urban activism. The book is also a primer on Berlin graf writers, including Amok, Blaze, and Dez 78. *Tyra Bangs*
www.die-gestalten.de



BREAKBEAT POWERHOUSE PROPELS DANCEFLOOR ANTHEMS FROM THE UNDERGROUND TO THE POP CHARTS.

Jonny L (born John Listner) is one of the most elusive forces in the UK drum & bass scene. He's prone to disappearing—sometimes for years at a time—only to sweep back on the scene with a track that gets everyone talking. His name is synonymous with sleeper anthems—tracks like 1997's "Piper" and this year's "Let's Roll" provoke the listener with militant beats, punchy bass lines, and Jonny's trademark: unexpectedly haunting melodic elements that stick in your mind long after the sound has been switched off.

The aptly-named Listner had his first hit in 1992 at the tender age of 18—a tune called "Hurt You So" made up of emotive bleeps, clever breakbeat loops, and a melancholy robot voice singing "*Can't believe I love it/baby, when you hurt me so.*" "It was a pure complete pleasure making that tune," he says, on the line from his London HQ. "At the time,

I was so in love with this girl and I wrote it for her. It was one of those relationships where every three days we would break up and get back together. I put everything I was feeling into that tune because it was a sad love. I wanted what I couldn't really have." In typical Jonny L fashion, the track—one of the first to mix breakbeat with house—initially got a horrible reaction. A month later, Fabio and Grooverider started playing it, and it's now considered a rave classic.

Since "Hurt You So," Jonny L has dabbled in and out of the underground. Following two massive drum & bass albums, 1997's *Sawtooth* and 1998's *Magnetic*, he tried his hand at UK garage under the name True Steppers. Showing his pop finesse, he ended up hitting the UK Top 10 with "Buggin'" and "Out of My Mind," which featured Posh Spice on vocals. Although he got sick of dealing with the pressures of the major labels, Listner remains an avid pop fan, listening to American R&B for songwriting inspiration. "I like the easiness of it," he

explains. "The way the production and the mixes are done, it feels effortless."

You can't hear many R&B influences on Jonny L's new album, *27 Hours A Day*, although he does manage an effortless combination of the ethereal and uplifting with the dark and aggressive, pairing militant stormers like "Let's Roll" with soulful vibe tracks like "Listen Right." Unlike previous efforts, the album was inspired less by rave escapism than by the need to express modern-day realities like terrorist attacks and Iraqi bombings through drum & bass's relentless rhythms. While the record reflects recent moods, the one thing it was not inspired by is the current drum & bass zeitgeist. "I haven't really been checking out what's going on in 'the scene,'" says Listner. "When I don't have to listen to [other people] and I just do what I do, there's always going to be one track that's going to come from a slightly fresh angle. It gives me freedom and then I'm not [afraid] to experiment.")

www.jonnyl.net



Andrew Brown aka Mr. Brown (left) and Malik Williams

BROKEN BEAT FROM BROOKLYN? BELIEVE IT.

Champion Soul began as a duo disseminating melodic broken beat groove, but has since expanded into an all-encompassing New York project, one which is as far from the bedroom massive as it is from the hol-low sound of the Neptunes's bling.

Brooklyn-based Andrew Brown and partner Malik Williams discuss their vision, process, and new material with chemistry and ease—Brown lays the groundwork while Williams distills his comments to their very essence. “We started out as a party and we’re *still* a party, but we always felt we needed to expand on things,” Brown states. “Once we started to [produce music] it came together naturally, because we both know music and have similar tastes. When you get into the studio it solves a lot of problems.”

“We’re working within a structure that’s very difficult—bringing a song format to elec-tronic music and still having it be dance-able,” relates a talkative Brown. “Each time I

feel we’re getting better and better at it, but our ideals are still way up there.”

The pair’s recent album, *Excursions*, brings a warm, human touch to machine-made grooves, featuring a diverse range of vocalists on almost all the tunes. Brown describes the process of recording vocals as a “community affair.” “You see the vocal-ists featured, but we also bring in a key-board player, a horn player,” he explains. “They’re all friends that we hang out with. We’re interested in the studio atmosphere and the dynamics and what other people bring to the whole event, the different per-sonalities. Maybe my initial reaction is ‘What is this?’ But that person needs to express [himself], so you have to sit back and let them run with it and see how it turns out. It has to be a really nice balance.”

Far from resting on the blissful fruits of *Excursions*, Champion Soul is already halfway finished with their second album. “It’s from a very strong soul outlook,” clari-fies Brown. “The album [has] a strong black traditional element, yet it’s very song-struc-tured with beautiful melodies. There’s more

futuristic soul.”

The Afro influence will be extremely in your face,” Williams elaborates. “It’s more rhythmically involved. It’s tech elements dealing with the soul base.”

Though the duo’s sound may nod towards the underground bounce of Bugz in the Attic and the sultry swing of nu-soul, their purest inspiration remains close to home—the African, Haitian, Jamaican, and current hip-hop sounds that make up Brooklyn’s musical mix. “I bought the new 50 Cent and I love it,” Brown says. “Actually if there’s anyone I’d love to work with now it would be 50 Cent because he’s just so smooth. You can give him any type of beat and he’s gonna flow.”

“That’s the next phase for people like us,” concurs Williams. “We’re not into some elite thing. This music is for everyone—in a Jeep driving around Brooklyn, wherever!”

Champion Soul’s debut album Excursions is out now on Life Line Records.



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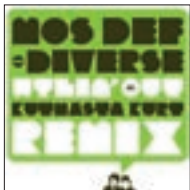
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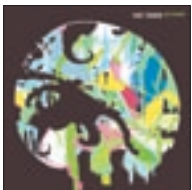
CHLT034
Mos Def & Diverse
Wylin' Out
(Kutmasta Kurt Remix) 12"



CHLT037
Diverse
Explosive 12"
featuring Lyrics Born,
production by RJD2



CHLT041
Ghislain Pourier
Beats as Politics Mini-LP



CHLT043
Via Tania
Boltanski EP
Two new tracks and a remix by
A Grape Dope (John Herndon)



CHLT045
The Timeout Drawer
Presents Left for the Living Dead EP
featuring remix by Caural



CHLT046
Vast Aire
Look Mom... No Hands 12"
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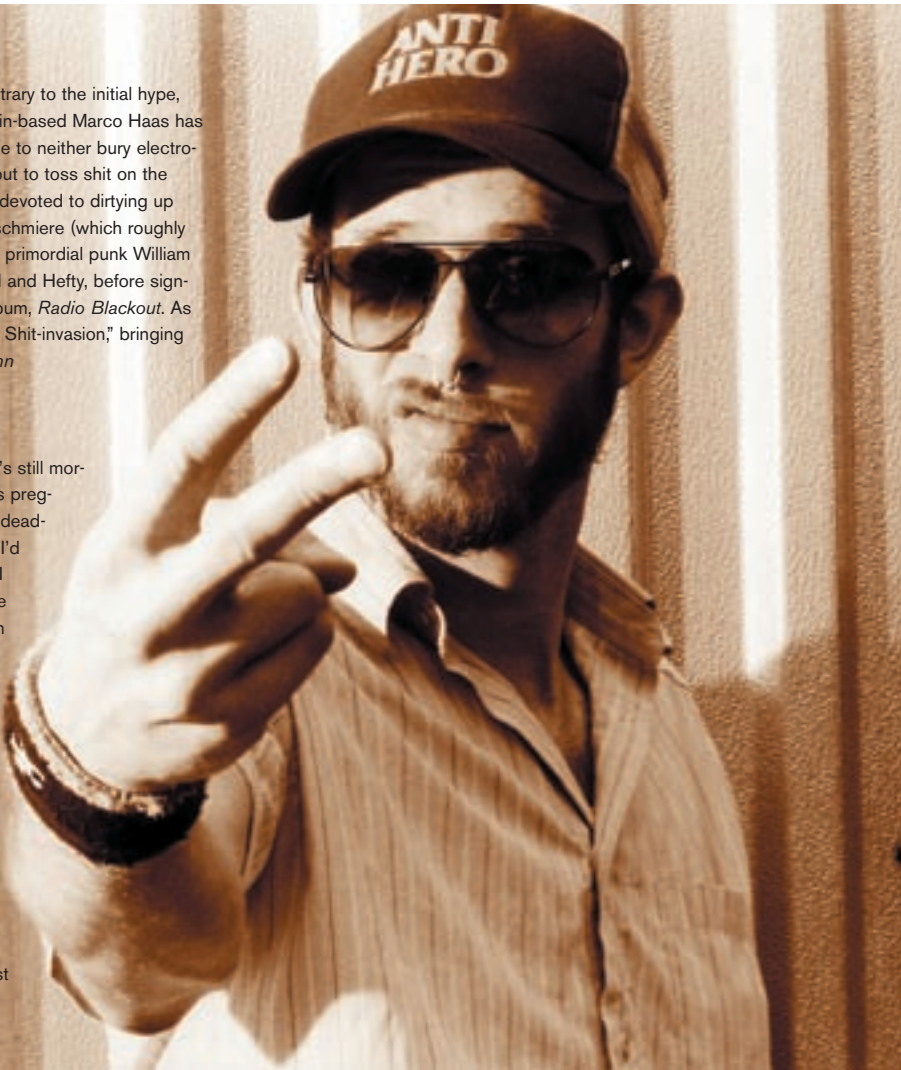
Contrary to the initial hype, Berlin-based Marco Haas has come to neither bury electro-

clash nor praise the “technopunk” label that many have pinned on him, but to toss shit on the whole deal. Since 1997, he’s run the prolific Shitkatapult label, which is devoted to dirtying up techno’s oft-sterile veneer with distorted punk-bass attitude. As T.Raumschmiere (which roughly translates from German into “Dream Cops,” the name of a short story by primordial punk William S. Burroughs), he’s put out tunes on labels like Kompakt, Bpitch Control and Hefty, before signing on to indie biggie Novamute to record his crunch-rocking second album, *Radio Blackout*. As you read this, Haas has landed in the US for what he calls “a November Shit-invasion,” bringing his renowned uncontrolled live show to a venue near you. *Ron Nachmann*

T.RAUMSCHMIERE ON FAMILY

Yeah, I’m a punk rock daddy.
My son, Milan, is six months old. It’s hard to tell who he looks like—he’s still morphing. That dude has definitely influenced me, because my girl Mara was pregnant right when I was producing *Radio Blackout*. It definitely gave me a deadline, you know? I wanted to be finished by the time he was born so that I’d have time to be with them and wouldn’t have to be in the studio all day. I don’t think it influenced my music directly, since I’ve been working on the album for a long while, and when I work on music, I drown very deeply in it. But it definitely made me organize my time, and work more tightly and be more concentrated.
Birth is a regular thing that happens every day—it’s how we evolve. It was pretty normal for me, actually. Of course it was special, but it wasn’t a reason to stop doing everything else. It was part of the process in a way, and just a logical step.
As far as touring, for most of the summer I’ve been home during the week, then touring on weekends and a couple of two-or three-week trips. But that’ll end early next year, and I’ll be free and have more time for the kid and Mara. She’s been supporting me with all this. She hasn’t been making me stay home. She’s my relaxation factor. She calms me down after a day at the office or on the road. We don’t talk about music at home—nothing about DJs or who dissed whom or whatever. Just regular shit.

www.muterecords.com, www.shitkatapult.de



SPIN CYCLE **Adventure Time**, a new collaboration between **Daedelus** and **Frosty** of **Dublab**, debuts November 4 with an album on **Plug Research**. Guests include **Saul Williams**, **Mia Doi Todd** and **Pigeon John** • **Rest in peace Johnny Cash**, who died on September 12 of respiratory failure • House imprint **West End Records**, home to artists such as **Blaze** and **Soulstation**, is one of the first indie imprints to sell MP3s online, and will vend such classic tracks as Taana Gardner’s “Heartbeat” and Loose Joints’s “Is It All Over My Face” at www.westendrecords.com • **Universal Music Group** announced plans to drop the prices of most new CDs to **\$12.98**, an almost 30 percent decrease. What does a price war smell like? • In between listening to lots of 92.7 FM “The Party,” **Gold Chains** and **Kit Clayton** have recently completed a booty bumpin’ Euro-flavored remix for **Madeleine Minx** • Get Dizzee: UK garage rap superstar **Dizzee Rascal** recently scooped up the prestigious **Mercury Music Prize**, beating out **Coldplay**, **The Darkness** and **Floetry**, among others • **Emotif** is back on the scene this fall with drum & bass releases from **Social Security** and **Sketch & Code** • Metalheadz’s **Goldie** recently told UK paper *The Guardian* that “People that are well-off lie through their teeth when they say money can’t buy happiness” • London’s Fabric nightclub celebrated four years on October 17 • Buzzin’: San Francisco imprint **Wide Hive** unleashes *Wide Hive Remixed* on November 18th, with music from **DJ Design**, **Djinji Brown**, **Tommy Guerrero**, and **Kaskade** • **Asheru** and **Blue Black** have a new one out, also November 18th, called **48 Months (7 Heads)** • Rumor has it that drum & bass DJ/producer **Fresh**, formerly of **Bad Company**, now calls NYC home • **Slip ‘N’ Slide** taps into the best modern Afro-house with their compilation *Afrique, C’est Chic*, featuring sounds from **Bob Sinclar**, **Kerri Chandler**, and **T-Kolai** • France’s premier techno organization, **Logistic**, teams up with Detroit expat **Dan Bell** for a new album, *Blip, Blurp, Bleep*, followed by a remix record in mid-November featuring **Cabanne**, **Richie Hawtin**, and **Metro Area**, among others • **Buddyhead**’s first major label comp, *Gimme Skelter*, is out now on Nettwerk featuring tracks from **Mudhoney**, **Icarus Line** and the **Yeah Yeah Yeahs** • **The Best of Slednecks** DVD (Melee Nation) covers the latest balls-out sport craze, extreme snowmobiling • **Zion I** were recently nominated for an award for Independent Album of the Year by *The Source* magazine. Other contenders include **Baby D**, **Cormega**, **Little Brother**, and **Paul Wall Chamillionaire**. Winners will be announced on the awards show, which airs November 11 on BET • Nov. 11 also marks five years of London’s **Aerosoul** party with an event co-hosted with Boston’s **Phuturistic Bluez**. Performers include **Charlie Dark**, **Nookie**, **Bailey** and Australia’s **Greg Packer** • Philly stake: **King Britt** has recently remixed **Spacek**, **Grand Agent** and the **Isley Brothers**, and is currently writing tracks for nu-soul artists **Jill Scott** and **Vivian Green** • Click on www.warpreCORDS.com/lfo to watch the new LFO video for “Freak Single” • **Amsterdam Dance Event** happens October 30 through November 1 and will feature seminars and performances from **Derrick May**, **Moloko** and **Francois K**. For the line-up check www.amsterdamdanceevent.nl • Sleep tight!



from left: Yeah Yeah Yeahs, Ronald and Ernie Isley of the Isley Brothers, Johnny Cash, Goldie, Charlie Dark, Daedelus, Dizzee Rascal, Vivian Green

LUKE MCKEEHAN'S PUMPING HOUSE IMPRINT PUTS VANCOUVER ON THE MAP.

Mickey Rooney knew it. Macauley Culkin concurs. Corey Haim couldn’t agree more. Being a child actor can suck. Luckily, Canadian house impresario Luke McKeehan got out of the game with his sanity intact.
“I just wanted a normal existence,” insists the Toronto native, whose last movie was 1987’s *Concrete Angels*, in which he played a scrappy Irish street kid. “I was never an ass-kisser. I just wanted to work for myself.”
The entrepreneurial McKeehan made the most of his childhood fame, using his earnings to finance underground parties at the tender age of 15. Since moving to the West Coast in 1993, the 32-year old bachelor has been at the forefront of Vancouver’s dance

music scene, throwing some of the city’s first warehouse events and opening an underground club, Sonar.
McKeehan was also a driving force behind Canada’s first acid jazz label, Mo’ Funk, out of which grew a house imprint, Nordic Trax. Now recognized as one of the dopest labels in deep house, the six-year old NT is a trend-resistant juggernaut, riding out the whims of the marketplace with its consistently stellar catalogue of black platters.
While the label’s best known for cranking out succulent tech-house singles from the likes of Gavin Froome and Morgan Page, the last few months have seen McKeehan building the brand in new areas, with the release of a lovely downtempo compilation (*Button Down Beats*) and a sultry mix CD, *Dancefloor Principles*, blended by Chicago’s reigning queen of soulful house DJ Heather. According to McKeehan, NT’s

cautious move into the home listening market is in keeping with its modest industry goals. “It’s never been about being super successful,” he remarks. “It’s all about surviving. I only ever hope that we can make enough money off one release to pay the [artist] advance for the next one. That’s it.”
Nordic Trax is truly an all-in-the-family affair, a label whose focal artist (Froome) also maintains the website. For McKeehan, who regularly travels the globe as both a businessman and a DJ, Vancouver is the perfect place to call home, a port city where all the globe’s cultures are welcome. “The city sells itself,” he enthuses, pointing to the success of bands like the New Pornographers as an indicator of the scene’s fertility. “When we bring DJs in from places like London, they’re just flabbergasted by this place. Who wouldn’t want to live here?”

www.nordictrax.com



From left: Gavin Froome, Luke McKeehan with Ella, John McFarland and Dana Baird



The world resonates with the legacy of the Boogie Down Bronx. Unfortunately, tourists exiting the 5 train to Hunts Point in the dirty-dirty might only find themselves face-to-face with meat markets, projects and stores selling cut-price Gucci knock-offs. Enter [Soundwalk](#). The Manhattan-based company creates audio tours that throw the world around you into high resolution. Rather than pulling out your chunky guide book every few blocks, hop on a train, slip on the headphones, pop a CD into your Discman, and partake in a guided tour that integrates quotes from local luminaries with music, movie dialogue and ambient street noise, from bodega owners arguing to New York's ubiquitous taxi cab honks.

Having already led visitors around both Paris's St. Germain district and the Lower East Side, Soundwalk now teams up with Adidas to visit the Bronx, via three tours that use the subway system as a link to the borough's cultural landscape: the 4 Train adventure centers on Yankee Stadium and baseball history; the 5 Train—narrated by BG183 from TATS Cru—dives into Hunts Point graffiti culture; and Grandwizard Theodore and Afrika Bambaataa appear on the 6 Train, explaining how the Bronx River area became the epicenter of the global hip-hop phenomenon.

Perhaps the best thing about Soundwalk is that it doesn't assume that you only care about the last 20 years of history—the Bronx tours also give airtime to the influence that Art Deco, arson and local politics have had on the area's inhabitants. *Vivian Host* The Bronx Soundwalk (\$18.95) is available at [Amazon.com](#), [Colette \(Paris\)](#) and [MoMA Design Store](#), [Tower Video](#), and [The Apartment \(New York\)](#). [www.soundwalk.com](#)



DVDS: RAP SHEET

Even within the thriving genre of vegan student co-op rap, MCs Clouddead and Radioinactive sound wack and scattershot: gimmicks like hand puppets, Cookie Monster outfits and megaphones do not a hip-hop artist make. More fly and funkier than the rest, Labtekwn and Boom Bip would seem to be the saving graces of *Mush Tour 2002* (\$15; Mush Records), a new DVD that documents a comprehensive number of live performances from Mush Records artists. But Labtekwn is only featured in two numbers out of an exhaustive 23, and Boom Bip sounds flat when he's paired with Doseone—he falls prey to the latter's hyper-abstract conceptual word puzzles.

In all fairness, as *Mush Tour 2002* is devoted exclusively to live show footage, it's more electrifying than Definitive Jux's *Revenge of the Robots* DVD (\$20; Def Jux), even if El-P, Mr. Lif, and RJD2 are more down and grimy than their Mush counterparts. Cinematography and soundtrack-wise, *Revenge of the Robots* is much tighter, but it devotes too much airtime to El-P engaging his cohorts in rambling conversations about nothing in particular. *Rachel Swan* [www.dirtyloop.com](#), [www.defjux.com](#)



THE BATTLE BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL IS ABOUT TO REACH EPIC PROPORTIONS!

SAINT-GEILIA



The worldwide anime phenomenon has arrived at last! Coming to DVD October 21st, with all of the thrills and action of its original Japanese release. Let the new era of legends begin!

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GERMAN LAP-POP SONGSTRESS AND TECHNO-BEAT SURGEON LOOSENS UP.

Nichts Muss, Barbara Morgenstern's third album, is a manifesto of sorts for the Berlin-based songwriter. Roughly translated as "nothing has to be forced," *Nichts Muss* stands as testament to Morgenstern's gradually more relaxed compositions, which distill intrinsically German melancholy and increasingly joyous improvisation into a shower of skitters anchored by organ and Morgenstern's honest vocals.

"The other albums were more in patterns with computers," says Morgenstern. "They were a bit of me hiding myself. With *Nichts Muss* I wanted to open up more, to make something more dancey with the dynamics and tensions developed in this thing I do live."

Morgenstern live is not what you'd expect from her recorded lap-pop output. Outfitted in

all black, she strikes a serious figure. But with an organ and keyboard-accompanied by a PowerBook and a live drummer—Morgenstern makes each performance into a fist-pumping epiphany, her smile stretching ear-to-ear.

Part of a generation of families still directly damaged by World War II, Morgenstern grew up in close proximity to Dortmund in the small industrial-belt town of Hagen. She turned to music early as means to explore and express herself. "I started to play piano when very young," she says. "[When I was] ten years old I took classical. I started to get jazz lessons, but I really hated rehearsing. It was easier for me to formulate my own world of sound in the computer."

Beginning with the basic sequencing capabilities of early Korg and Atari, Morgenstern's compositions evolved concurrently with technology, and now exhibit the cut-up characteristics intrinsic to Macintosh manipulation. Her encapsulations, all of which begin as simple

piano pop, are characterized by warmth, strange harmonic twists and what she terms "a bit of trash" in the beats. Doing post-production with Thomas Fehlmann (Kompakt, R&S) and Stefan "Pole" Betke, Morgenstern drapes textured treatments like billowing swatches of cloth over intimate vocals, creating immediate-yet-spatial mixes.

Morgenstern says that it's important for her music to be true to her background, but also have a sort of universal appeal. Says Morgenstern. "It is important to me that when I'm playing in countries that do not speak German that [my vocals] work as well. I didn't want lyrics [that had to be comprehended in order] to make the song work; I want my music and melodies to evoke as well."

Barbara Morgenstern's Nichts Muss is out now on Monika Enterprise/Labels. www.barbaramorgenstern.com

Featuring Music by:
 Dirty Vegas,
 Kylie Minogue,
 The Crystal Method,
 Jocelyn Enriquez,
 K.C. & The Sunshine Band,
 4 Strings,
 PLUS MANY MORE



Over 65 songs and 100+ minutes of authentic dance music



Mild Lyrics

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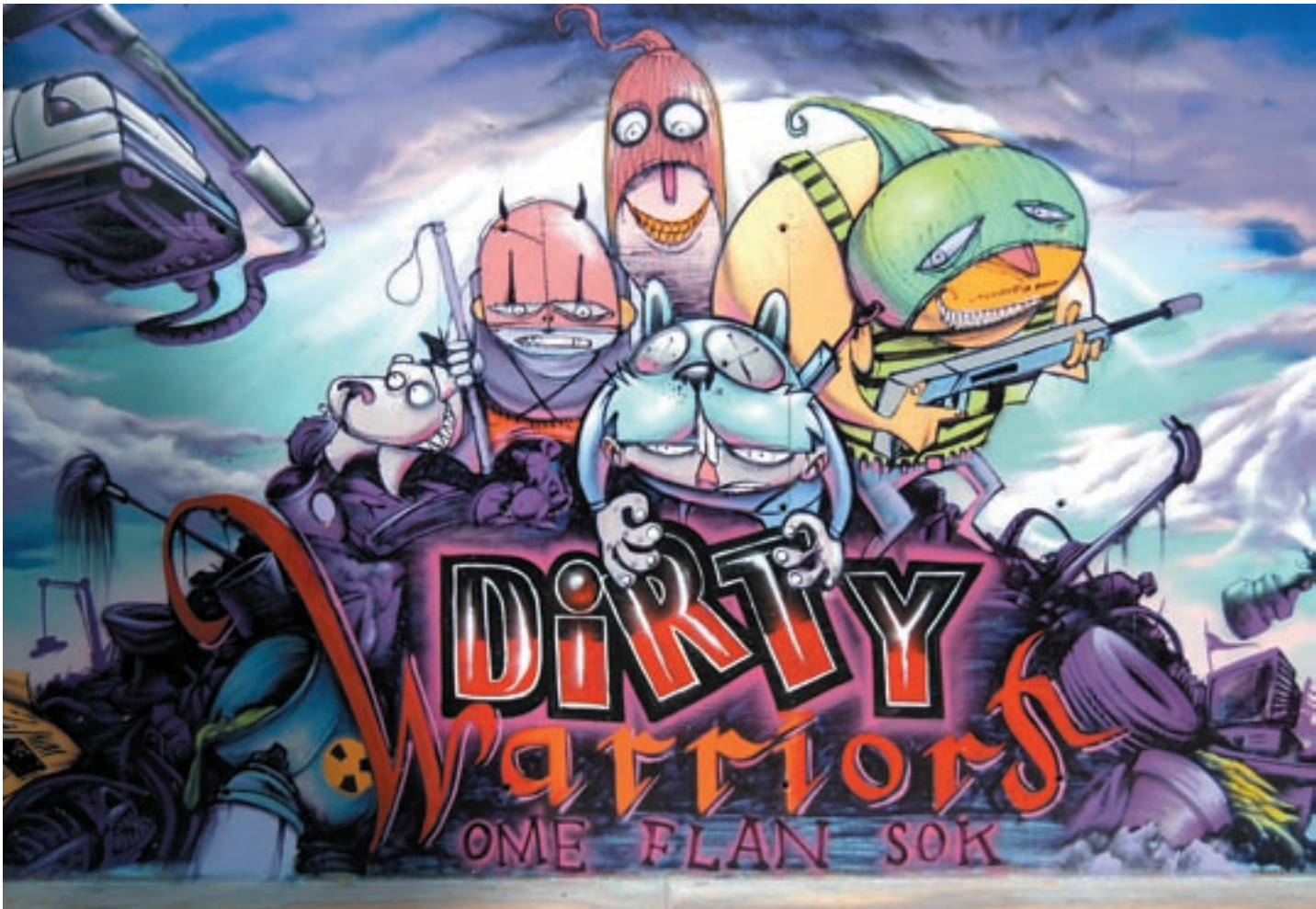


PlayStation®2

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Left: Dirty Warriors (Ome, Flan and Sok)
Above right: Polio; Below right: Ikea

“Kill Jordi Labanda,” reads the scrawl on the wall, the black ink stark against centuries-old stone. It’s easy to understand the sentiment: the (in)famous graphic designer, formerly of Barcelona sports-wear company Custo, developed the pictorial style—an animated tableau of high-cheekboned, narrow-waisted women living in ultra-leisure—that many have come to associate with Barcelona itself.

After the design boom of the 1980s, the Mediterranean city came to be seen as a walkthrough of a *Wallpaper* magazine spread, a corroded labyrinth in which minimalist, brushed-steel-and-glass wine bars nestle against one another like alluring, but toxic, architectural orchids.

But Barcelona’s true graphic culture lies neither in its high-fashion veneer nor in the knockoff Picassos that third-rate artists hawk to tourists along the lower Ramblas—it’s found sprayed on walls and doors, the secret décor of railroad tracks and construction sites, bringing the proto-psychedelic architecture of Antonio Gaudí into the 21st Century.

Thanks to its location and its laissez-faire spirit, Barcelona is a hub in a global network of graffiti capitals. Pieces by well-known international artists like France’s Space Invader and Miss Van pepper the city as distinctively as its remnants of Roman stone, while murals by Germans, Brits and Belgians testify to an annual influx of spray-can-clutching tourists invading Barcelona like latter-day Vandals. The best work, though, belongs to Barcelona’s resident scribes, who, by combining classic hip-hop styles with elements of high modernism and beyond—Expressionism, Surrealism, Pop—have given the city a new visual language.

It’s usually easy to tell the local products from the work of *giris*, or tourists. While the latter blanket popular walls with derivative studies in wild style, Barcelona’s own experiment with impressionistic portraits, cartoon-like sci-fi narratives, graphic abstraction, and, not infrequently, politics—no surprise in a city where anti-war banners

still flutter from balconies on every block.

“We’re not rappers,” laughs David (a.k.a. Vida), who got his start writing 13 years ago, and today works at the graf supply store Numero 4 (Nine Yards Shop) when he’s not throwing up his characteristic, highly vaginal flowers. “We don’t just imitate hip-hop styles, we draw from a range of experiences, from skateboarding to rock to raves to Spanish painters like Miró, Picasso and Tàpies.”

Appropriately, the politics of graffiti are different here: it’s less about marking turf than occupying space, however temporarily. The walls can change weekly, even daily, often painted over by colleagues in quick succession. “We’ll call each other up,” says one of the members of the NGO collective, “and say, ‘Hey, do you mind if I paint over that piece you did last week?’” The rotation keeps the streets fresh, like a museum whose permanent collection is remade daily. Just as unusual, a collaborative spirit prevails that sees some of the movement’s core figures—Freaklùb, Thek, Pez, Skum, Úf, J Loca, SIXE, Bordel, Magoh, Debens, Omick, Xupet, NGO, 1980, Flan, IKEA, and Paris transplant Chanoir—teaming up in twos and threes and tens, intertwining their trademarks in dense patchworks of urban allusion. One of the most popular styles, accordingly, is “logoteam,” in which each artist lends his or her own logo—Pez’s toothy fish, Chanoir’s minimalist cat, Xupet’s Haring-like pacifier—to the spraycan mashup.

Not all the city’s residents are fans of the phenomenon: two cranky old men chided a photographer documenting the walls to “Go photograph Picasso!” But when the Spanish artist’s signature has been sold to the auto company Seat, it’s not hard to see that the so-called high culture’s legacy is running on fumes. Meanwhile, Barcelona’s street artists are inventing the next vital art movement one clattering can at a time.

www.bcngraffiti.com



YOU AIN'T SEEN NOTHIN' LIKE DUBLAB'S TRAVELING ART AND MUSIC SHOW UP OUR SLEEVE, WHICH OFFERS COLORFUL LP COVERS FOR IMAGINARY MUSIC.

**WORDS
STEPHEN CHRISTIAN**

Nearly every young record collector has had at least one conversation with a bitter old record collector in which the senior expounds upon “the good ol’ days,” before music videos and the internet, and before art-minded West Coast music/culture magazines. These grizzled vets would tell you that their visual connection with the music came directly from tracing the cover art of their favorite records with their eyes while rocking

out. Whether they were tripping to Pink Floyd and the LSD-added art of Hipgnosis or Peter Saville’s brilliant, angular designs for New Order and Joy Division, the connection between music and art was irrefutable.

A few people who *don’t* need a stern talking-to from a burnt-out rocker in an irony-free satin Stones jacket are the beat farmers behind Dublab.com. For four years, Dublab has been transmitting dub, hip-hop and house-heavy DJ sets to online listeners across the globe. Now, like JT ditching N’Sync, Dublab is taking it to the next level with Up Our Sleeve, a mobile art collection featuring over 200 international artists using blank 12” record sleeves as their canvases. With contributions from decks ‘n’ trucks-friendly heavyweights like Mike Mills and Geoff McFetridge to musical moonlighters Mr. Scruff and Mia Doi Todd, and more up-and-coming talent than you can shake a paintbrush at, the show has already wrecked LA, SF and San Diego, and will hit NYC and Tokyo in the coming months.

One of the masterminds behind Up Our Sleeve, Dublab founder Mark “Frosty” McNeill, breaks it down for the simpletons. “This idea clicks perfectly with the Dublab spirit. We are a DJ-driven music laboratory. Each Dublab DJ digs through thousands of pieces of wax each week. Vinyl is a part of our existence. As you’re whizzing through record bins, cover art is the first indication of what may lie in the grooves. The music and the art are merged. When you think of certain albums, the cover image automatically pops into mind.”

Although music is certainly a unifying thread, McNeill is quick to let you know this is *not* some tired, new age, art meets music cheese. “The art was not created to fit existing music. They are free explorations. We urged the artists to go far out and freak the covers. Shred, paste, paint, spray, stencil, doodle. The result is exciting and diverse. Shiny, flat, 3D, text, photos, stitching, etc.”

www.upoursleeve.org



OPPOSITE Unscene
TOP, L TO R Ara Mgrdichian, Buffmonster, Jill Gifford
MIDDLE, L TO R Colin Burns, Laurent Fetis, Mike Mills
BOTTOM, L TO R Hersk, Logan Hicks, Luke Wilhite

XLR8R: *What is your favorite 12” cover of all time?*
Laurent Fetis: “Public Image Limited, *Public Image*.”

XLR8R: *What prompted you to join the Up Our Sleeve exhibit?*
Hersk: “A high-protein, low-fat diet in conjunction with regular physical activity.”
Buffmonster: “I wanted to make the best record sleeve of all time.”



TOP, L TO R Rodney Clouden, Kutmah, Kevin Christy
MIDDLE, L TO R Dorothy, Scott Richards, Zen Sekizawa
BOTTOM, L TO R Florencio Zavala, J.T. Steiny, Brandy Flower

XLR8R: What prompted you to join the Up Our Sleeve exhibit?
Florencio Zavala "Simultaneous email attacks from Kozyndan and Frosty."

LARGE Haze
TOP, LEFT Bridgette Yellen
MIDDLE, LEFT Saul Williams
BOTTOM, L TO R Gerardo Yepiz, Nago Richardis, Jeffrey Kelly

XLR8R: What is your favorite 12" cover of all time?
Nago Richardis (Nonconceptual) "The 'Ziggy Stardust' single by Bauhaus."



LARGE Kozyndan
TOP, L TO R Joanne Smets, Kutmah, Ari Star
MIDDLE, RIGHT HVW8
BOTTOM, RIGHT Mike Maxwell

XLR8R: What is your favorite 12" cover of all time?
Tyler Gibney (HVW8): "DJ Shadow/DJ Krush's 'Music for Mad Lifted Beat Junkies.' A classic Futura 2000, Swifty and Ben Drury collaboration."
Kozyndan: "The one we did for Daedelus—"The Household" on Eastern Developments. We aren't cool enough to own vinyl, so it's one of the few we own."

TOP, L TO R Kime Buzzeli, Andrew Neuhues, Mike Dytri (pt 1)
MIDDLE, L TO R Graphic Havoc, Andy Loy, Mike Dytri (pt 2)
BOTTOM, L TO R Glen E. Friedman, Jason Macaya, B+

XLR8R: Describe your Up Our Sleeve contribution in one word:
Mike Dytri (Subfreakie): "Enigmatic."
Peter Rentz (Graphic Havoc): "Fucked up and not particularly well done visualization of an Anti-Pop Consortium song."

XLR8R: What is your favorite 12" cover of all time?
B+: "The two covers (UK and US versions) for 'Midnight in a Perfect World' by DJ Shadow. I'm slightly biased!"



CLOSE-UP

FROM BALDNESS TO A BLOND BOB, AND FROM A DEMURE HOUSE IN WINDSOR, CANADA TO A MODERN FLAT IN BERLIN, RICHIE HAWTIN EMBARKS ON ANOTHER ADVENTURE AS PLASTIKMAN. TEN YEARS AFTER THE PROJECT BEGAN, HOW WILL THE NEW HAWTIN AND HIS NEW PROJECT FARE?

WORDS HEATH K HIGHLIGHT
IMAGES DAVID NAUGLE

This is all on the heels of another Plastikman album, *Closer*. It's the latest chapter in a project Hawtin started with 1993's *Sheet One*, which countered a cheeseball rave scene with engrossingly cerebral techno. As a guise, Plastikman met with exponentially greater success as it culminated in 1998's classic *Consumed*. And although he's previously suggested that the venture is at its end, Hawtin's now back on the press circuit waxing deeply on the new Plastikman aesthetic.

Of course, 2003 is a different environment for Plastikman. Thanks to his groundbreaking 1999 album under his own name, *Decks, EFX & 909*, Hawtin, with his nerd chic and technological tendencies, is now a public commodity for fans and fashionistas alike. The space that used to separate Richie Hawtin's music from Richie Hawtin *the person* has all but disappeared, taking with it the inviting anonymity that had always characterized the moody, evocative Plastikman aesthetic.

All this creates a unique problem for *Closer*: Can it stand as a discrete component of the Plastikman legend or will the neophytes see it as a navel-gazing distraction from the pummeling they expect thanks to *Decks...*?

It's a grander question than, say, whether *Closer* can match *Consumed*, or even why Hawtin decided to move to Berlin. But we have to start somewhere.

XLR8R: Moving to Berlin is a significant statement, and sounds like a pretty permanent situation.

Richie Hawtin: Yeah, I think it's probably going to be at least a permanent European move. I'm keeping a place on each side of the Atlantic, because I was in New York last year for a year, and although it was amazing, sometimes I'd say, "That's two places to look after now, and they're both on the same continent." And with 70% of my gigs being in Europe, if I'm going to get a second place, then I should have one in Europe. If things go really well, then I can have a third place, one in New York. Right now, it makes much better sense to have a European base and a North American base.

XLR8R: What about your recent stint in Ibiza?

RH: I've been there every summer now for three years, doing events with the techno party Cocoon and other music clubs. Ten years ago I went to Ibiza and I said I'd *never* go back because I had the worst experience. It just sucked. But the last three years have been really amazing. It's been nice being part of the group of people who are really bringing techno back to the island, because it wasn't there for a long time. It was just full of commercial, you know...

If you were to see Richie Hawtin—founder of the famed techno label Plus 8 and about a dozen other music projects including his minimal techno persona Plastikman—standing around on the street just a year ago, he would have left the impression of being just another urban-chic nerd clad in neutral metal-toned synthetic threads, perhaps scratching his signature bald head and fiddling with thick glasses or an overstuffed record bag.

Now, thanks to a paradigmatic shift in his outward presentation, Richie Hawtin's got the chiseled baby-face profile of a Jil Sander model—and the sniffles. They're the kind of sniffles you get after you've spent endless hours in airports and on trains, anticipating your next connection, where you'll have dinner, rushing after lost luggage. The sniffles of the jet set.

That's exactly the case when *XLR8R* catches up with the producer who started a techno revolution in the early '90s. Hawtin, back from a summer stint in Ibiza, has just moved to Berlin and has been waiting for his clothes for four days. The funny thing about this techno icon is that, despite a renowned allegiance to his native Windsor, Ontario, he already feels at home in Berlin.

"I don't even have my bed yet!" he jests, settling in after learning that the airline will deliver his luggage directly. "My bed's in Windsor, and even though I don't have [it] here yet, it still feels like home."

XLR8R: *Crap. It was full of crap.*
RH: Yeah, I was gonna say shit, but yeah, I need to cut back on that word!

XLR8R: *You know, a lot of people still think of Ibiza as being bikinis, booze and bad trance music. Not anymore?*
RH: I think Ibiza can be [that]—there's something for everybody. And as much as people complain that Ibiza is just ass and titties and people freaking out, some kind of techno community exists. I find that this is the case more so in North America than in other places, but people get too uptight about their music and as much as I want things to be progressive and to be an art form, it has to be *fun*! And basically Ibiza is an island that seems to let even the people who don't normally relax to do so. It's a really cool place where you see the DJs going as crazy as the crowd. Being on a dancefloor with a drink in my hand, freaking out!

XLR8R: *Now you're working on a new live project, Control, that implements a custom-designed Allen & Heath mixer into a suite including Ableton Live and Final Scratch. Do you ever stop pushing yourself?*
RH: I have an innate fear of stopping or slowing down! I've lost friends and things along the way because I drive them crazy having to find something new. I got into this not only because I love the music, [but also] because it was computer-based music. I love the technology aspect. My dad was buying crazy records and always updating his hi-fi system when I was a kid, trying to build computers, you know, always moving forward. If there's kind of a lifeblood that runs through the music and the scene that I'm involved with, it's that tie between technology and progressiveness. I don't care how old I am—I don't want to grow old and stop progressing in my mind, my heart and my music, and I think that's part of the whole techno ethos. You know what I mean?

XLR8R: *Absolutely. Did that impulse drive you to do the DJ gigs with the Apple iPods?*
RH: I've loved the iPod since day one. When I heard about them doing this, calling DJs up and a bunch of my friends got booked for it, I was like calling Apple myself, saying "I want to do it!" And they said, "We're just looking for local DJs," and I was like, "I don't care, I want to do it!" You know, it gives me a contact with Apple, it gives me maybe one minute or five or maybe an hour to say what I think, which is the way the iPod should go. And hopefully they'll ask some other people and they'll say the same thing, and hopefully down the line they're going to have a DJ iPod.

XLR8R: *So, is everyone going to be able to get this new Allen & Heath mixer you've helped design for use in the Control parties?*
RH: I was just talking to the techs at Allen & Heath and they're working on a new design of the mixer. But it doesn't really incorporate what we've put in. All [the mixer] design was done by my dad.

XLR8R: *Really?*
RH: Yeah, so we did all of that in-house. My dad has really been behind the scenes since the beginning. He was buying me my first computers probably because he wanted them more than I did. Along the way he's been doing modifications in my studio, some extra things I've needed, and we've talked about doing something collaborative. We talk about building crazy shit and selling like 100 of them...but it's too time consuming for my dad. But it's been really good. There weren't any mixers out on the market that I wanted, that would enable me to do what I wanted. There were a couple pieces that if you put them together, they would do it, so that's what we did, and there it is!

XLR8R: *Well, let's not avoid the unavoidable: Closer. This album has a noticeable absence of sonic space. Nevertheless, people are trying to make connections between it and the more spacious Consumed.*
RH: They really are two different beasts. *Consumed* was really about a landscape, an atmosphere to reside in. The very first inspiration for *Consumed* was sitting in a field in the middle of the woods north of Michigan with a couple of friends. It was pitch black, the blackest black I've ever known, and all I could do was sit there and listen to echoes of my friends' voices and try to locate them within this space. I didn't know if this space was one-meter square or a thousand by a thousand, but it felt endless. It felt like an expanse greater than you can imagine, and that was where that concept, that sound, that echo of *Consumed* sorta formed. And with *Closer*, emotionally the album is closer. It really is much more about what was inside of my head during the recording process, and I real-

IT WAS
PITCH BLACK,
THE BLACKEST
BLACK
I'VE EVER
KNOWN



GROWING
OUT MY HAIR
AND GETTING
RID OF GLASSES
DID IT, IT WAS
THE BIGGEST
HEADFUCK

ly wanted it to feel like you were in the enclosed space of someone's head. So everything would be crystal clear, but really, really up front. Like when you put a really warm or favorite song on, and you put it on the speakers and you're like, "Yeah," but when you put it on headphones, it's *all-encompassing*, it's right in front of you. That's really what I was trying to get at. So, hopefully it came across.

XLR8R: *Thinking again about all of your travel requirements, what's your perspective on all the tension between East and West?*

RH: Another reason I was definitely thinking about this move is that I don't feel very comfortable with the situation in North America, especially the US, with the way things are being run and the condescending attitudes of the government in America to everybody else in the world. One of the things that I've always liked about Europe before all of this stuff is that with all the languages and close proximity of all the cultures, I think there's been more of an understanding of the differences between peoples in this world, and people seem to get along more openly on a greater level. America is about being assimilated and being like everybody else. I don't want to be like everybody else.

XLR8R: *But you know, one could say that your haircut is like everyone else's now.*

RH: Yeah, you could say that! But then you have to look at how many bald-headed electronic musicians there are, so...

XLR8R: *Have you gotten a lot of flack about that?*

RH: The thing about my look over the last ten years, it became a little bit iconic—dark glasses and my bald head. It's part of the reason I changed it. It became so iconic and it was kinda ridiculous. It became a joke unto itself. I've had people say, "Oh you're so much more approachable now," and if that's how I look because of hair and no glasses, well, fine! And I really love playing with people and fucking around with them, and if growing out my hair and getting rid of glasses did it, it was the biggest headfuck.

XLR8R: *Who are you looking forward to collaborating with in Berlin?*

RH: One of my friends and a great producer is Ricardo Villalobos...he's really amazing. Ricardo and I talked about it for a long time, so we're looking forward to doing a couple of tracks among friends, maybe a couple of us together you know. It's a real friendly openness here about that kind of stuff, and I really want to be a part of that too. So I'm taking the place for a year, and we'll see what happens. ☺

Closer is out now on Novamute. www.mute.com.



5 SLABS OF PLASTIK

A guide to the essential moments in the elastic career of Plastikman.



Sheet One (Novamute, 1993)
303/909, punchy. Deep, heavy bass; Detroit all the way, but with the tone of IDM's DNA, the *Artificial Intelligence* series.



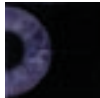
Musik (Novamute, 1994)
One year later, Plastikman sounds more enamored of ambience and space, with Roland sounds taking on depth and dimension not found on *Sheet One*.



Artifakts (bc) (Novamute, 1998)
Intended to bridge *Musik* and *Consumed*, *Artifakts (bc)* is minimal squiggling 606 leitmotifs-cum-synth themes accompanied by deeper, heftier bass.



Consumed (Novamute, 1998)
Brooding, menacing, *Consumed* has a soul. It mines the world of Basic Channel and monotonous German muted pounding to conjure up a netherworld.



Closer (Novamute, 2003)
More to-the-front sounding, *Closer* is driven more by the round-punch of midbass than deep thunder, but not as ominous or atmospheric as *Consumed*.



FUTURE FOLK

“ALL THE DETROIT STUFF JUST MAKES ME WANT TO DRIVE THROUGH THE CITY AT NIGHT WITH SUNGLASSES ON. IF I DID THAT, I'D LOOK LIKE A PRICK.”

ONCE THE REALM OF MACHINES, ELECTRONIC MUSIC HAS RECENTLY THROWN OPEN ITS DOORS. A NEW CROP OF COMPOSERS NOW WEAVES ACOUSTIC SOUNDS AND FIELD RECORDINGS INTO THE DIGITAL FABRIC, GIVING E-MUSIC A FOLKSY CURVE. BUT PLEASE, DON'T CALL THIS MOVEMENT FOLKTRONICA.

WORDS ALEXIS GEORGOPOULOS IMAGES ABIGAIL'S PARTY

Roots & Extensions

It's never taken much to inflame a folk purist. Over the years, we've heard endless accounts of conflict and controversy whenever some "free spirit" strays from folk's cobblestone-lined path. The most infamous episode may be the 1965 Newport Folk Festival, when Bob Dylan "shocked the world" by leaving his acoustic guitar in its case and plugging in a Stratocaster. According to myth, the move so enraged Festival directors and folk luminaries like Pete Seeger that they attempted to cut the electrical power with an axe.

You can't deny the poetics of using an instrument beloved by all nature-bound, self-made men of yore to sever technology's umbilical chord and render it mute—and you can't help feeling the cold blade of artistic fascism in their fury. The story's made even stranger considering Seeger penned "Turn! Turn! Turn!," a song adapted from Book of Ecclesiastes that proclaims, "To everything, there is a season/And a time to every purpose under Heaven." Apparently, Heaven had no use for electricity.

Electronic music has often been thought of solely as the province of machines. While the strum and yarn of folk evoked rural settings and nostalgia for simpler times, electronic music—often associated with the steely hydraulic lift of techno, house, and electro—represented its antithesis, informed by assembly-line production, the cool veneer of automobile transport and the metaphorical liberation found in computer worlds.

Electronic musicians typically fixate on what hasn't been done rather than on what has; their hard-line futurism reflects a break from the musical past, a flight from tradition, nostalgia, even memory. Whether made in pristine European university research labs or in dank Detroit warehouses, its wintry focus hasn't been on the here and now, but on a mythical *elsewhere*.

If certain folkies felt constrained by the nostalgic rules governing the acoustic tradition, electronic music's faith in all things synthetic has proven dogmatic in its own way. And so, like weeds growing between hard drives, a new musical sprout has burst forth, bringing with it a strange, wonderful hybrid of organic and digital sound. Paralleling the recent international renaissance in folk-influenced



music (which includes lo-fi singer Devendra Banhart and Japanese *naifs* like Nagisa Ni Te and Maher Shalal Hash Baz) and the Midwestern American underground noise folk scene (i.e. Six Organs of Admittance, Animal Collective, Sunburned Hand of the Man), the electronic/folk outgrowth finds inspiration in folk traditions, avant-garde classical forms such as *musique concrète*, furniture music, serialism, minimalism and field recordings. In short, it's as if electronics have been taken outside for a bit of fresh air.

Branching Out

Printed on uncoated cardboard, like a fibrous cross between a Victorian circus ad and a wanted poster from a spaghetti Western, the duo Matmos's 1998 oddity *The West* provided an introduction to the shift taking place in electronic music. Like modern-day equivalents of '60s sound documentarian Alan Lomax and '50s electronic pioneer Pierre Henry, Drew Daniel and Martin Schmidt took the influence of early folk recordings and experimental sampling to the vast expanse of old and new Americana.

On *The West*, Matmos filtered environmental sounds through innumerable software programs and blended those sounds with analog synthesizers. Krautrock, hip-hop and minimal house mingled with the ghosts of '60s folk-blues guitar innovators like John Fahey and Robbie

Basho. If Tortoise's 1996 album *Millions Now Living Will Never Die* made traditional genre divisions seem obsolete, *The West* took the suggestion and ran with it. Daniel and Schmidt created a sound both rustic and ultra-modern, of its time yet comfortably outside of time, organic and digital, and both regionally bound and unfixed. Perhaps most importantly, it steadfastly ignored the divide between acoustic and electronic music.

If *The West* focused its lens on the beige and neon of the mythical American West, Englishman David Edwards—who records as Minotaur Shock—looks to the British countryside. Like a clubber who's lost interest in jackin' beats and now prefers birdwatching at sunrise, Edwards's *Chiff Chaffs & Willow Warblers* invokes both lush green fields and wistful states of mind. The album's pastoral sound features acoustic guitars, hazy samples, hip-hop drum loops and tranquil atmospheres, yet it's conceived from a palpably urban vantage point.

"Electronic music has been a pretty urban art form in the past," Edwards surmises. "All the Detroit stuff just makes me want to drive through the city at night with sunglasses on. If I did that, I'd look like a prick. Perhaps other artists feel the same, and want to create music that would suit their environment, or the environment they yearn to live in. An environment where they could do what they want and not look like a prick."

A similar inclination towards environment informs the work of Carpark labelmates Ogurusu Norihide and Greg Davis. Based in Tokyo, Norihide, a Shinto priest, reveres the natural life forces, or Kami, which surround us. His gorgeous albums *Humour (Study and I)* and *Modern* rise and recede like the pulse of the wind. Their compositions tug gently, at times recalling the reflective piano etudes of French Dadaist composer Erik Satie, at others conjuring up distinctly un-Japanese guitar ruminations closer to John Fahey or the Velvet Underground. "It is the same feeling when I am listening to good music as when I'm in the woods in a shrine," Norihide told Carpark owner Todd Haynes. "Good music makes good space."

Michigan-based Davis shares Norihide's inclinations towards space. His album *Arbor* is infused with a Midwestern autumnal glow—its cover features a snapshot of him standing in a forest of multicolored foliage. *Arbor* borrows as much from Fahey and British troubadour Nick Drake—Davis actually samples Drake on "Nicholas"—as it does from the hypermodern rhythmic sensibilities of IDM, breakcore and hip-hop.

Strikingly modern as it sounds, Davis doesn't find his approach, or those of others, particularly novel, let alone new. "Composers have been combining electronic and acoustic sounds ever since it's been possible," he explains via email. "Even in the folk genre—Buffy Saint-Marie's *Illuminations* from 1970 is an excellent early example. Recently, I think it's more a matter of re-expanding the genre of popular electronic music, because it's become too closely tied to techno/dance/electro over the past 10 or 20 years."

Wildlife Analysis

Davis may be onto something. Rephlex artist Bogdan Raczyński, infamous for his erratic, spastic splattercore breakbeat sensibilities (akin to his friend Aphex Twin), released *My Love I Love* in 2001. Featuring sleeve art that shows Raczyński in bed, the album is tactile and intimate, resembling a fusion of tango, folk, jazz, classical ambient music and Raczyński's idiosyncratic musicbox electronics. Similarly, Weschel Garland made drum & bass as Saucer but lost interest in its beat-tyranny. On *Liberation von History*, he's created wonderful new folk with accordian, melodica and Fender Rhodes piano.

Meanwhile, as Four Tet, Kieran Hebden's early releases showcased a cinematic approach informed by '60s spiritual jazz, post-rock and hip-hop. But with its harp, koto, acoustic guitar and environmental sounds, last year's *Pause* revealed Hebden's newfound interest in rural atmospheres, derived from what he saw as an unfulfilled gap promised

IT'S NEVER
TAKEN MUCH
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A FOLK
PURIST.

by '60s British folk music.

"I saw this documentary on [60s folk-blues revivalist] Bert Jansch that led me to check out Pentangle records and things like Fairport Convention and Nick Drake," he told me two years ago. "But I found I couldn't relate to it. So, instantly, I started dreaming of this folk record that had [acoustic] sounds but where the folk band was playing more like repetitive Krautrock or the psychedelic jazz of Alice Coltrane or something."

Similarly, other artists, such as Iceland's Múm, Germany's Uwe Schmidt, Denmark's Goodiepal and Japan's Asa Chang & Jun Ray make reference to regional music without mimicking the traditions hook, line and sinker. Múm's members combined their country's regional heritage with electronic music after the group heard an Aphex Twin CD.

As Señor Coconut and Los Samplers, Uwe Schmidt has transformed both the German "industrial folk" of Kraftwerk and '50s mambo of Perez Prado into glitched-out future folk. Danish prankster Goodiepal, meanwhile, creates a distinctly manic form of Nordic folk music informed by video games and his own charming brand of attention deficit disorder. Goodiepal's anti-folk isn't a far cry from the lunatic Fourth-World musings of Japanese group Asa Chang & Jun Ray, who combine digital textures with tablas, Balinese drums, guitars and mariachi bands on their Leaf releases.

With very different results, Austrian Christian Fennesz has re-incorporated his acoustic guitar as a reaction to a lethargic reliance on cutting-edge technology in digital music. Fennesz has always used guitars in his recordings, often deconstructing them into pure texture and combining them with glitchy digital textures. But last year's *Endless Summer* provided a marked departure. A nostalgic response to the myth of the epic American summer and the '60s American surf movie of the same name, *Endless Summer* stands as a riposte to the "anonymous" personalities that prevail in technologically driven experimental electronic music. It combines technology with the singular quality of artistic voice. Further, its personal and cultural temperament brought the element of memory back into a genre that generally shuns the past.

Folk as Ambience

As Fog, Minnesotan Andrew Broder fuses folky singer-songwriter strains with his untidy version of the 21st century's new folk: hip-hop. On his Ninja Tune albums *Fog* and *Ether Teeth*, he borrows the skewed hip-hop, surreal lyricism and genre-play of early Beck with the messy catharsis of Neil Young and Sebadoh. The result is highly personal and idiosyncratic, a snot-on-sleeve declaration of unwavering amateurism.

Closer in approach to Fennesz are France's Dorine Muraille and Germany's Stephan Mathieu. On *Mani*, Muraille (birth-name Julien Locquet) deconstructs delicate acoustic guitars and the words of young French poet Chloe Delaume into fractured, dislocated digi-folk that reflects like shattered stained glass. Mathieu, meanwhile, specializes in a kind of Proustian sampling, by which bits of *Peanuts*—era

Vince Guaraldi, Sonny Boy Williamson and The Beatles act as triggers that activate “the library of sound in the back of one’s head.” For Mathieu, “it’s about an essence of sound. I think of [my music] as very personal, without any specific social intentions. It’s about memory, places, daydreaming, a private view.”

Memory and place figure prominently in the music of Boards of Canada and Wolfgang Voigt. They both create their own outdoors of the mind. Linking early-’70s aesthetics with the post-club culture of Aphex Twin, Boards of Canada have created a single-minded visual and aural aesthetic that draws on ’70s and ’80s nature-film documentaries, kaleidoscopic fisheye-lens photographs and the specter of lost childhood memory. Like Wolfgang Voigts’s alias Gas—whose album *Konigsforest* soundtracks a miasmic audio-memory portrait of Germany’s Black Forest—Boards of Canada use the outdoors as the location metaphor for blurry memories and triggered associations, lurking at every turn, lost in the tangle of the underbrush.

Everyday People

If some producers rely on a private, personal view and a digital/acoustic sound mix, others have an interest in “real” sounds, the very ordinary sonic textures that surround us. Like Alan Lomax’s recordings of remote clans and societies going about their daily proceedings, these artists similarly focus their compositions around natural and random sounds.

One duo fascinated with such everyday sonics is Alejandra & Aeron, who run the unequivocally indie documentarian label Lucky Kitchen. Formerly based in New York and currently in Barcelona, Lucky Kitchen may be the closest thing to a modern-day version of the ethnographic Smithsonian Folkways imprint. Albums such as *Notebook On Cities and Clothes* and *Bousha Blue Blazes* combine field recordings with family folk songs and all manner of outdoor ephemera, from Bollywood pop to birds and static. As they see it, the loaded, sometimes maligned word “folk” encompasses it all.

“Folk is everyday culture,” they explain straightforwardly. “We usually think of it as everyday culture from the past, but we think it goes from the past to the present. We think video games are folk culture. Folk always changes. For example, Irish folk and African folk mixed in the United States to become American folk music, and then went out to influence Africa and Ireland again.”



BELLEUE BOSTON NEW YORK SAN FRANCISCO SANTA MONICA SOUTH COAST PLAZA LONDON PARIS MELBOURNE TOKYO



As Marz, professor of digital media Ekkehard Ehlers and sound designer Albert Kunze have a more modern slant on this approach. Their album *Love Streams* features what Kunze likes to call “digital folk.” *Love Streams* takes in the homogeneous sounds of shopping carts, advertising jingles and other incidental sources, combining them with microhouse rhythms to form a future folk music that encompasses sounds nearly everyone is familiar with today. With its 21st-century signifiers, familiar to many despite national origin, their “digital folk” may represent a sort of global, developed-world folk.

Norwegian Kim Hiorthoy may represent a middle point between the amateur sincerity of Lucky Kitchen and the sophisticated future pop of Marz. Known best for his idiosyncratic sleeve designs for Norwegian label Rune Grammofon, Hiorthoy’s creative endeavors (he photographs, draws and makes music) are united by an interest in daily tasks, textures and places. Hiorthoy’s album *Hei* is characterized by the random, ramshackle sounds heard around the house: refrigerator doors opening, answering machine messages, pots and pans clanging. But where Matthew Herbert, Akufen or Matmos might transform these sounds into virtually untraceable items, Hiorthoy leaves them as they are.

If neologisms are thrown around to describe the music of Hiorthoy and many of these artists—pastoral electronica, laptop folk, folktronica—they only serve to draw perimeters around what is in fact a varied, vital inclination. Merely a snapshot of a current musical moment, it’s bound to continually mutate. As Alejandra & Aeron see it, “The exciting thing about all of this is the uncontrollable, unstoppable way we all keep on keeping on—everything changing and mixing and evolving again and again.” Well put—but what would Pete Seeger think?®

Check these sites for more on the artists and topics mentioned: luckykitchen.com, carparkrecords.com, dominorecordco.com, frieze.com.



ADVENTURE TIME
Dreams of Water Themes
Adventure Time is Daedalus and Frosty (Dublab.com). Guest appearances by Saul Williams and Pigeon John.



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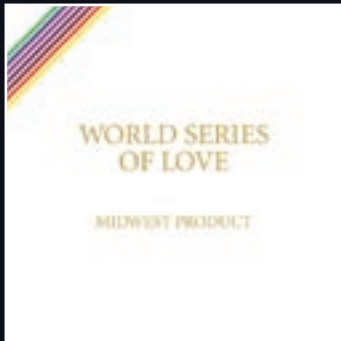


HIGH & MIGHTY
Highlite Zone
The High & Mighty return with The Highlite Zone. The label that brought you Cage, Weathermen, Copywrite offer up 16 tracks tracks w/Rahzel (the Roots), Cage and the actor Michael Rappaport. Production by Mighty Mi, Rjd2, Reef (50 Cent) & more.



LADYTRON
Softcore Jukebox
Ladytron host a new wave block party with their 18 track DJ Mix compilation featuring My Bloody Valentine, Wire !!!, The Fall and much more. Also includes Ladytron's punked up version of Tweet's "Oops Oh My" and a rework of "Blue Jeans".

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LOVE CHILD

A LOT OF MCS TALK ABOUT DOIN' IT FOR THE LOVE. LYRICS BORN LIVES THAT CREDO DAILY.

WORDS PETE BABB IMAGES ZEN SEKIZAWA



**LET
IT
BE
KNOWN:**

Lyrics Born is not afraid to do the Vegas circuit when he gets older. “Believe you me,” the MC/producer/A&R laughs, “if I’m 65, and people still wanna hear my shit, I’m the first person in Vegas. I’m the first guy with the ruffled fuckin’ pink shirt and the pink lamé cumberbund.

I’m there!”

But he’s not there yet. He’s still in the Bay Area—a place he’ll never have to move away from, he hopes—and as he strides down a North Oakland street, he muses on his sense of contentment that his debut solo album, *Later That Day*, is in the can and about to drop. “I feel real good about it,” he states. He confirms the sentiment a short time later seated at a table outside a café, drinking an iced tea. “I’ve never felt as good about what I’m doing as I do now. I’m really happy. I feel like everything is connecting at this moment. It’s a great feeling.”

The album itself is a connection of several stages, by LB’s own reckoning. Its roots go all the way back to 1998, when he first met a funk group out of Munich, Germany called the Poets of Rhythm. “[The album] started out that I really wanted to make a record using a band. I had gone pretty far with the sampler, and I was ready for another challenge. I wanted to express myself musically in different ways,

more spontaneously. I went on two or three trips to Munich, and I think those trips really changed me.”

Learning about music wasn’t the only change Lyrics Born went through during the recording of *Later That Day*. He also saw his home label, Solesides, fold and be reborn as Quannum. He suffered personal loss with the death of his father. And he enjoyed personal gain with his engagement to songstress/music co-conspirator Joyo Velarde—a friend of the Quannum crew from back in the day at UC Davis.

In fact, the musical give-and-take between LB and Joyo has been crucial to their artistic development. “I’ve given him melody and harmony assistance,” says Velarde. “I’ve helped him train his ear that way. He definitely has a natural ear, but sometimes he can’t figure out how to get that into a physical form from his mind’s eye to the track.”

Not that *Later That Day* was made completely within the insular world of Lyrics Born’s own crew. Check the credits: You’ll notice very few collaborations with other producers or MCs. This is by design. “Whenever I’m doing a song or doing an album, I kind of sit back and look at the landscape, and I’m like, ‘What’s missing?’” LB states. “I felt at [the time that I was recording this album], there were so many records coming out with eight people on each song, and I didn’t want



to do that. The challenge was how to make it entertaining,” he points out. “How was I going to do a whole album with just me rapping and still keep it interesting and entertaining? So I approached every song thinking that it had to give you something different than the last song or the next song.

“At the end of the day, I don’t make music in a cubicle with a pair of headphones and a sampler just to entertain myself,” he continues. “A large part of why I do it is because you want to connect with people, and you want people to get something from it. I wanted to bring [listeners] something they’re not gonna get on any other album. And I wanted it to bang, too. I didn’t want it to be real heady or real intense. It has its dark moments, but you can also have fun with it. And that reflects my tastes.”

And Lyrics Born’s tastes are all over the map, which has led to some issues with artistic direction. Specifically, with so many directions to pursue, which one is the right one? “I had a conversation about 10 years ago with JMD, who’s the drummer for the Underground Railroad in LA,” Lyrics Born relates. “I was like, ‘I want to do all these things, but I don’t know what direction I want to go.’ And he said, ‘Man, just

do it all.’ And those words stuck with me forever. From that point on, I never censored myself. It doesn’t mean I didn’t exercise quality control, but I never censored myself.”

But for all his musical expansion, one theme has run strong through Lyrics Born’s body of work, including *Later That Day*: love. “I just think we need more of it,” he shrugs. “I think to make your life worthwhile, you need to have it. You love what you do, you love what you eat, you love who you’re with. It makes a huge difference.”

And not only does Lyrics Born’s music discuss love, it exemplifies the love he has for music. Ask him about his biggest nonmusical passion, and after a moment of pondering, he’ll say, “I just like being stimulated. I love walking down the street and just inhaling everything that’s going on. I could sit at a table just like this, with an iced tea, for hours. Just peep everything. I’m a tireless observer. Maybe it sounds stupid, but I love doing that shit—I love getting out and experiencing shit, whatever it is. I just like to stay inspired. But I can’t point to any one thing outside of music. Music is a lot to me.” Which is why his music is a lot to a lot of people.®

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“ALL
YOU
NEED
ARE
DOLLARS.”

THE SIGNIFIER

ARE THESE REALLY THE WORDS OF DETROIT HOUSE HERO THEO PARRISH? YEP, BUT WHEN *XLR8R* CRASHES TEATIME IN THE SOUND SIGNATURE OFFICE, IT LEARNS MONEY IS FAR FROM EVERYTHING.

WORDS NICK DOHERTY IMAGE WILL CALCUTT

Some basic Theo Parrish facts: he's a DJ, remixer and producer who was born in Washington, studied in Kansas City, and lives in Detroit. His record label is called Sound Signature, and along with Kenny Dixon Jr. and Rick White, he's involved in the feted Three Chairs Project. He began spinning at 13, made his first beats at 14 and has a fine arts degree.

Parrish is an ambassador who links his music's past and future, as shown by his recent modern reworking of '70s jazz legend Sun Ra. Here, as in his few other interviews, he has nothing particular to promote and no interest in marketing himself. He does press interviews in a principled way, mentioning contemporaries—particularly Larry Heard—in order to get them deserved recognition. That approach might come off as anachronistic, but it's better described as ethical and reminiscent of Matthew Herbert, except that it's true to a vivid musical legacy rather than rigid, rational policy. Parrish is thoughtful and articulate, and speaks with a voice you could swim in.

XLR8R: *How are things in Detroit?*

Theo Parrish: All is good. We don't get much good weather here, so I'm enjoying the sun. I'm going out, checkin' on some people... they all come out in the summertime. I can't complain.

XLR8R: *How did you first start out doing music?*

TP: All the young black kids from the south side listened to the big radio shows and DJs. I formed a little crew with friends of mine and everyone asked their moms for mixing equipment. Next thing you know we're running around doing block and basement parties for little or next to nothing.

XLR8R: *You managed to pursue an education despite the potential distraction of music. Did the two ever conflict?*

TP: [Think of it] like this: nobody at any point in life has ever been *hindered* by education. There are a lot of people in underground music who are college educated—I mean a *lot* of them. You'd be surprised. I'm talking easily 50 percent of the American producers. I'd say I built a lot of my [record] collection [at college] in Kansas City. There's a huge amount of diverse musical talent and taste there.

XLR8R: *Do you enjoy DJing as much as producing?*

TP: [To me], music is nothing but a language. It's the method with which you command that language that makes you distinct in any given form. A lot of people come into it thinking, "I can make a little bit of money spinning tunes, keep my profile up..." I don't think that's a valid reason for picking up records.

XLR8R: *Let's talk about your extremely limited "Ugly Edits" series. There was talk that this had been bootlegged. Huge numbers of them*

turned up in stores, particularly your re-edit of Jill Scott's "Slowly Surely."

TP: When I was coming up, there were these edits you'd come across on mix tapes and they were the *illest* things in the world. I sent that to [Jill Scott's production company] Hidden Beach and never heard back from them, so I did a couple of [white labels]. I was doing it to put a little fun back in, because at the time there was none! I wanted to do a hundred as presents, which I did, and I found that people had put them on eBay and they'd been booted. I had a choice—it was either keep pushing them and do large runs, or give them away as gifts. From now on, the series will be done strictly as gifts in tiny numbers, I won't be selling [them]. I wasn't trying to capitalize—there's not even a name on them, though I know the boots have my name all over them.

XLR8R: *You used Jill's voice from your answering machine on one of your records?*

TP: I met Jill Scott at a concert. In fact, it was more I went to see her. I barely met her—I just tossed a tape up on stage, and she called me, which was cool. I wanted to give her the respect, let her know I appreciated her calling. I heard remixes of her tunes after that and a lot of them sounded very stock and basic. I was hoping that her introduction into dance music would be less harsh.

XLR8R: *What's your next big project?*

TP: It'll be featuring a lot of Detroit artists, musicians and players. It's a project I'm calling The Rotating Assembly for now. I'm really into this project.

XLR8R: *There seems to be a good spirit of co-operation in Detroit at the moment, with the Beatdown and Detroit Experiment albums surfacing...*

TP: That's more or less the idea. I've been working with people I know already, and some people that have been on the periphery that I'm trying to bring into focus. There's a brother called Warren Harris who's done some stuff for us before, Marcellus Pittman, this cat Maat Lo, a great vocalist called Karen Bosco and Genevieve...there's quite a few.

XLR8R: *Do you relate or deal with the record industry, the mainstream?*

TP: I'm not against major-label exposure, but I won't change the format of my music to fit. If what I do works and gets played, great. If what I do earns a company a bunch of money, that's cool too. That happens as a result of the process, and it's one I won't block or resist on principle. But hear me: I'm not getting on stage in a silver suit. At least not seriously. I'll do it for fun.

www.soundsignature.com

DEEZ

As Chicago's No I.D. says, "the one that's in the middle is the one that sees the most." Cincinnati, Ohio's booming hip-hop scene finds itself just slightly on the wrong side of the Mason-Dixon line to be part of the Dirty South revival, and it couldn't be much farther from the East or West coasts. Where does that leave its artists? Free to define themselves.

In the case of Five Deez, quite possibly Cincinnati's most prolific progeny, the definitions are numerous. The four-man crew (Pace Rock, Sonic, Fat Jon and Kyle David)—whose name is short for "Five Dimensions"—have just dropped their latest album *Kinkynasti* on IK7, but they're already working on a follow-up LP, among other things. Pase Rock has a new solo album (*Bullshit as Usual*) and is working on two more simultaneously, while producer Sonic and MC Kyle David are working on their album. Not to be outdone, Fat Jon, who now lives in Berlin, just released an album with that city's minimal-dub meister Pole, and is also working on a project with Styrofoam and his other *other* group, Rebel Clique. Somehow, Pase and Jon found time to chat about their new album, N-bombs and Jabba the Hut.

XLR8R: *The new album, Kinkynasti, really pushes the boundaries. It sounds more like dance music than straight hip-hop.*
Fat Jon: It's a precision electronic hip-hop dance record with specific intent.

Pace Rock: [Laughs] Nice.

FJ: We thought a little change could shake things up a bit. It's more focused.

PR: We specifically tried to make this a hip-hop record 'cause a lot of people say that our last album was more "leftfield" or "experimental." We knew we would never do a straight "hip-hop" record, so we took this opportunity to do it the way we did it.

XLR8R: *I'm sure that a single like "Funky" will perplex a lot of people. At 132 BPM and with four-on-the-floor beats, it doesn't fit neatly into most people's notions of hip-hop. Thoughts?*
PR: Well, there you go. Fuck hip-hop. Hip-hop can

kiss my black ass. If hip-hop was a person, I feel like it would be Jabba the Hut. He's an alien but, you know, with gold chains and shit. Jabba the Bling.

FJ: There aren't that many fundamentals anymore. People don't even know what they're a part of or even trying to represent. It's just popular. When the popularity fades, then what?

PR: Just blingin'. It's not like hip-hop is Flava Flav any more.

FJ: Hip-hop is like a religion where people go to find themselves and find self-confidence. It's just a platform for something for most people. By then, they'll be jaded enough to appreciate our "transdimensional space funk." [Laughs]

XLR8R: *Kinkynasti's title track opens with the line: "They mistook us for some neo-soul gospel rappers." Do you feel like you're pigeonholed a lot?*

PR: Yeah. That came from Kyle David. Some dude referred to him as "a nice neo-soul type brother."

FJ: We don't think people really understand that Five Deez is a group with three emcees. They think we just do instrumental stuff and talk over beats.

PR: Well, this is the thing: we're not in boxes as people. We don't think that way, so our music won't sound that way.

XLR8R: *There are two instrumental tracks on the album: "The Ocean," produced by Fat Jon and "The Rain," produced by Sonic. Are they related thematically?*
FJ: "The Ocean" is the first moment on the record to think about everything you just heard. "The Rain" is the calm after the storm.

XLR8R: *Jon, do you feel like more of an outsider as an American in Berlin or as the type of musician you are in the Cincinnati hip-hop scene?*
FJ: The feelings are actually pretty similar. I can't care either way. I started doing music as an outsider and

have continued in my own elegant tradition.

PR: Sexy. Classic. Yet refined.

XLR8R: *What's the hip-hop scene like in Germany?*
FJ: It's not interesting to me. The music doesn't speak to me. French hip-hop and UK hip-hop have a musical language that speaks to me.

PR: French hip-hop is dope.

FJ: Some of these cultures have actually taken it somewhere else and made it their own. That's what people need to do to advance music.

XLR8R: *Afrika Bambaataa advised other countries to rhyme in their native languages.*
PR: Word to Bam. The German scene is kinda like the 'Nati scene: identity crisis. Yo, Jon, tell your story about the German dudes sayin' "nigga."

FJ: I stay outta that shit now. If somebody feels comfortable enough to say it, that's on them.

XLR8R: *Germans say "nigga"?*
PR: Man, everybody does.

FJ: It's a lost cause to try to educate people on a word embraced by pop culture. It's too late. Black people dropped the ball. We [Americans] don't understand the impact of our culture on the rest of the world. We don't take enough responsibility for what we say and what we do as artists. It's bigger than people really know.

XLR8R: *Any final words?*
PR: Yeah. Fuck hip-hop. Wait, I already said that.

FJ: I want to tell people to think about the future. If more people thought of the future, music would be so much better.

PR: Yeah, think about the future. We are in it. People are stuck in the now and the past, just not thinking about adding to music. ☺
Kinkynasti by Five Deez is out now on IK7.

CUT

FUCK HIP-HOP. WAIT, I ALREADY SAID THAT.

DON'T GET IT TWISTED: CONTRARY TO WHAT THEY MIGHT SAY, FIVE DEEZ LOVES HIP-HOP. ON THEIR NEW ALBUM, CINCINNATI'S STRONGEST LINEUP SINCE THE BIG RED MACHINE RE-CHRISTENS THEIR HOMETOWN *KINKYNASTI* AND EXPANDS THE BOUNDARIES OF THE GENRE.

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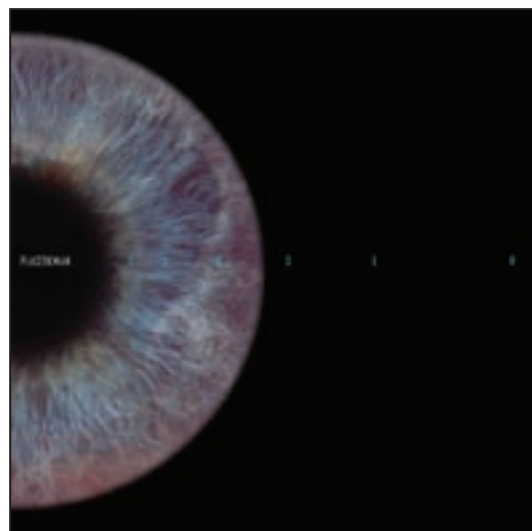
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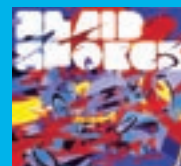
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Luke Vibert (left) and Plaid

XL REVIEWS 11.03



PLAID SPOKES
LUKE VIBERT YOSEPH
Warp/UK/CD

What Warp's released so far this year: an Aphex Twin double LP, an Autechre LP, the first LFO LP in seven years, and now Plaid and Luke Vibert LPs. The last time Warp had a line-up this breathtaking, Clinton was still that new guy from Arkansas and Nirvana was just hitting a plateau. As specious as that observation might be, it's a worthwhile point of departure for illuminating the state of Warp Records in their fourteenth year.

Tackling Ed Handley and Andy Turner's work as Plaid has always required mention of their seminal project with Ken Downey, The Black Dog. From their earliest EPs to their third proper album, *Double Figure*, Plaid struggled to supplant the quirky electro-Eurasian rhythmic patterns that made Black Dog's *Bytes* and *Spanners* basal for the IDM crowd.

Instead of sidestepping their heritage again, Handley and Turner turn back to those quirky rhythms on *Spokes*. "Get What You Gave" features the pizzicato synth melodies of Black Dog's *Bytes*'s "Focus Mel" or "Phil 3," bouncing around the sound stage like a thousand rubber balls loosed in a Kurzweil factory. "Cedar City" and "B Born Droid" share the long-toned leitmotifs of Black Dog's lesser-known 1993 album *Temple of Transparent Balls* on GPR—dark and brooding mood music with a hint of those syncopated rhythms.

Of course, this is still Plaid, as evidenced on the first track, "Even Spring," which, like the opening tracks on all other Plaid LPs, shoots the album's proverbial wad by coupling dazzling melodic interplay with the catharsis knob set to eleven. But the overwhelming emotional fabric running through *Spokes* was woven with a dark canine in mind.

Unlike Plaid, who've been with Warp pretty much since their start, Luke Vibert has never released for the label until now—a remarkable feat considering his former flatmates are Richard James (Warp Poster Child #1) and Squarepusher (Warp Poster Child #2). Nevertheless, Vibert too succumbs to a primeval urge, mining the electro-acid lode that got Warp started in the first place. There's a pertness underlying the jaunty notes in "Synthax," a stylistic tightness in the engineering that suggests Vibert's eased off his THC intake. More likely it's the nostalgia of working with rigid acid sounds, running the gamut from 303 bass subsumed in "Countdown" to protean New York hip-hop digital vocals on "I Love Acid" to varying flavors of Detroit: dark and dirty on "Acidisco," and house-y electro on "NokTup" that channels Dr. Albert Hofmann by-way-of Trax Records. Although a different flavor than *Spokes*, *Yoseph*'s positively rooted in the sounds of Warp's yesteryear.

Which begs the question: What's Warp up to, scheduling all these elder artist releases in the same year? Maybe they realized that while you can't go home again, there's nothing wrong with nostalgia—what you revisit might be damned inspiring. *Heath K. Hignight*

Chris Eichenauer of Sonesedpliat, Co.



DIVERSE ONE A.M. *Chocolate Industries/US/CD*
Chicago rhymr Diverse's name has been bouncing around for a hot minute now. Last seen knocking mighty Mos Def straight off the wax of Chocolate Industries' *Urban Renewal* comp, it's now *One A.M.* and Diverse is ready to step up and slam the mic down 'til it's broke. RJD2 heats the beats for "Certified," with Diverse verbally dueling a dirty guitar riff that could pass for vintage Keith Richards. Diverse brings talented friends like Madlib and Lyrics Born in for variety, but he hardly needs the help. His fast, staccato style makes up for a lack of vocal range by packing in the rhymes and nimbly leaping from topic to topic, jumping from furious battle rhymes to the reflective relationship-related verses of the Prefuse 73-produced "Just Biz." Diverse indeed. *Rob Geary*

ABSTRACT RUDE AND TRIBE UNIQUE SHOWTYME
Battle Axe/US/CD

With an exhaustive guest list that includes everyone from Aceyalone to Zulu Butterfly, Abstract Rude and Tribe Unique's latest is anything but the nitty-gritty. Which makes the listening experience alternately enthralling and enervating. There could always be a spitfire joint around the next bend like "Flow and Tell" (which features AWOL One, 2 Mex and Busdriver), but more likely it's a scattershot beat strung haphazardly to tepid vocals, as in the flat "Before We Gone" with singer Kia Kadiri. *Showtyme* is funky, but not consistently so—it doesn't always behovee an artist to have a hype guest list, especially when some of your guests outpace you. *Rachel Swan*

ALIAS MUTED
Anticon/US/CD
ATMOSPHERE SEVEN'S TRAVELS
Epitaph/US/CD

To rhyme or not to rhyme—pick your lesson. Both of the artists here set forth their own distinctive brand of hip-hop, with Alias opting to forgo emceeing while Atmosphere emphasizes the lyrical skills of Slug. Though his dense, emotive rhymes are always front and center, much of Slug's success can be laid at the feet of bandmates Ant and Mr. Dibbs—they forge beats into the perfect platform, balancing his dark vision with plenty of bounce. Meanwhile, Alias stretches the boundaries of hip-hop with introspective songs that flirt with post-rock, as on "Unseen Sight," featuring the melancholy vocals of The Notwist's Markus Acher. Together, these albums point to the vitality of a genre too often dismissed for its mindless consumerism or self-congratulatory tricksterism. *Peter Nicholson*



ANIMAL COLLECTIVE
SPIRIT THEY'RE GONE, SPIRIT THEY'VE VANISHED/DANSE MANATEE
Fat Cat/UK/CD
If the past few years have seen an explosion of interest in the psychedelic noise-folk scene, then Animal Collective's first two releases (reissued by Fat Cat records) are certainly two of the finest documents thus far. Their sound is expansive and loose, a surge of Technicolor sound, chaos, beauty and motion—comparisons to friends Black Dice, Incredible String Band, Amon Düül, Syd Barrett and Fennesz should give you some inkling. Better yet, such associations do not limit the sheer scope of members Avey Tare, Panda Bear, Conrad Deakin and Geologist, whose reissues constitute easily one of the most fascinating, confounding, brilliant releases of the year. *Alexis Georgopoulos*

Warner) has all the Buck elements, but is more melodic with more detailed stories. It's not as esoteric as past albums, which may lead some to cry "major label influence!" but he gets his new angle across without abandoning his old standards. It's a weighty listen, but one you can enjoy sinking your teeth into. *Melissa Wheeler*



CYLOBOTNIA CYLOBOTNIA
VICTOR GAMA PANGELA INSTRUMENTOS
Rephlex/UK/CD
Evidently not content with Astrobotnia's self-titled, mind-expanding Braindance trilogy of yesteryear, Cylob—still on gamelan/Terry Riley hangover from his *Mood Bells* album—teams up with the sometime Ovuca man to present further explorations into the multi-faceted, myriad layered world of the more and more appropriately labeled Braindance. Clearly not intended for crossover appeal, it's a brilliant listen for those who know. Earthbound, Victor Gama fashions modern compositions out of his homemade reconstructions of traditional Angolan instruments. Luckily, *Pangela Instrumentos* proves as interesting musically as Gama's revised kalimba is conceptually: a thumb piano set inside a discarded Angolan soldier's helmet. *Brian Paul*

MATTHEW DEAR LEAVE LUCK TO HEAVEN
Ghostly/US/CD

Gone are the days when US fans of minimal techno and micro-house had to emigrate to Montreal or Berlin to keep up with the state of the genre. We've got our very own hero in Ann Arbor's Matthew Dear, whose debut album for Ghostly, hot on the heels of a handful of singles for Ghostly's sublabel Spectral (in addition to records as False for M-nus and Jabberjaw for Perlon), practically reinvents the genre in a single stroke. Or make that a series of strokes. *Leave Luck to Heaven* tackles the Perlon-patented jitter-bug chug, the post-Detroit analog patina, and the spirited pop-tech-no of Kompakt and Playhouse. "Dog Days," with its singalong chorus, is one of the year's best singles on or off the dancefloor. If you can't get with this record, you're not only out of heaven's luck—in the words of track 10, "you're fucking crazy." *Philip Sherburne*

RICHARD DEVINE ASPECT: DSPECT
Schematic/US/CD

As valorous as any release you'll hear all year, Richard Devine's third album opens with the sounds of a ghost being squeezed into a machine, an appropriately ghastly introduction to the eerie journey ahead. Long revered for his technical mastery, the Atlanta native flexes his compositional flair here, inserting lovely melodies between his patented postindustrial eruptions. "Rusx Fee" stands out: a scabrous concatenation of breakbeats and laser stabs that will make you swear Richard D. James is in the building. The comparison to Aphex Twin is not made lightly—with *Aspect: Dsect*, Devine accedes to the league of legends. *Martin Turenne*



DONNA REGINA LATE
PLURAMON DREAMS TOP ROCK
Karaoke Kalk/GER/CD
Over the past few years, Cologne's Karaoke Kalk has been quietly releasing subtle gems. Their most recent two form a delightful night-and-day flip. Donna Regina's *Late* is pacific, ruminative electropop. Like a less hardened Nico scribbler. Over to Rocco Rot or Stereolab, Regina's influences are clear. And yet, repeated listens show something unique is at work here. Markus Schmickler's latest foray as Pluramon, meanwhile, is pure shoegaze bliss. Joined by Julee Cruise, avant garde guitarists Kevin Drumm and AMM veteran Keith Rowe, *Dreams Top Rock* owes a debt to My Bloody Valentine, Seefeel and, less overtly, Oval. *Alexis Georgopoulos*

DUB TAYLOR EXPERIENCE
Forcetricks/GER/CD
JOHANNES HEIL 20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SKIN
Kanzleramt/GER/CD

Dub Taylor floats his minimal tech house disco like a butterfly, jabbing small and swift and taut, keeping his elbows in close and his footwork deft and crisscrossing in a neat, controlled spring. *Experience's* syncopation—check "Miss Gopher City"—treads sexy, never heavy, and just the right number of vocal tracks adds a tender pout to the light dancefloor thrust. Johannes Heil's effort is far less restrained—20,000's turbo techno depth charge is heavily fueled but cursed with a turning radius too wide and slow to maintain interest. 20,000's the big burly bruiser, but get stung by the playful *Experience* instead: you'll be twice fly. *Selena Hsu*



BUCK 65 TALKIN' HONKY BLUES
Warner/CAN/CD
Listening to Buck 65's alt-hip-hop can be an artfully heavy experience. The producer/DJ/rhymer is known for his off-beat narratives delivered in his trademark weary, rough-edged voice over semi-melancholy and advanced melodies. His latest (and second on



ERASE ERRATA AT CRYSTAL PALACE
Troubleman Unlimited/US/CD
No wave standouts Erase Errata have had more recent hype—and, thanks to Sonic Youth, good luck—than any other truly indie band (not counting the slew of major-label revisionist garage rockers). They actually deserve it, because they've got the balls of D.Boon and the imagination of early '80s David Byrne. Their second full-length is filled with short and sweet disjointed jams (the pounding "Go to Sleep," "Retreat! The Most Familiar") that recall the high-toned guitar work of early Bauhaus and the Minutemen. The self-consciousness of the work sometimes gets in the way (check "Surprise It's Easter" or the deliberate deconstruction of song structure on the entire album), but it's refreshing to hear a badass band of ladies get loud and disorderly all over pop music's squeaky clean face. *Scott Thill*

EXPLOSIONS IN THE SKY THE EARTH IS NOT A COLD DEAD PLACE
ELUVIUM LAMBERT MATERIAL
Temporary Residence Ltd./US/CD

Explosions and Eluvium are two instrumental rock acts hailing from Austin, TX and Portland, OR respectively—in the finest tradition of bands like Godspeed You! Black Emperor, Slint and Mogwai, they manage to both soothe and scorch audiences simultaneously. The sound and the fury are manifested here in the form of gloriously epic rock instrumentals; Explosions takes a more bold approach with militaristic drum crescendos and melodic counterpoints on guitar, whereas Eluvium tends to favor a more glacial pace characterized by slowly dissolving walls of feedback and the forlorn sounds of a piano being played to an empty room. Whichever disc you choose, you'll no doubt feel cleansed and ready to begin anew. *Brock Phillips*

MARK FARINA AIR FARINA
OM/US/CD

Mark Farina, best known for his role as master shaman of the *Mushroom Jazz* chronicles, delivers his long-overdue debut that, as expected, is nothing short of superb. Interspersed with the cross-talk and chatter of a transatlantic flight, the album unfolds at a steady pace as Farina works things out on both the physical and mental level, grooving a solid course through instrumental hip-hop, jazzy soul and hypnotizing house. Touching base with fellow space-walkers Kaskade, Lance Desardi and People Under The Stairs, Farina unhinges the architecture of flight and launches the listener into a place far more ethereal and yet oh-so-real. Leave your seat-belt off for this one. *Chris Muniz*

FENNESZ LIVE IN JAPAN
Headz/JPN/CD

Many critics portray Christian Fennesz as the guy who digitized the Beach Boys on his 2001 landmark, *Endless Summer*. But this live document from February 2003 attests that his heart is not for the surfer girl. *Live* is a 45-minute stream of loops, where acoustic guitar melodies and organ timbres scatter like autumn leaves under a gale wind of static and scrambled microtones. The opening number's smeared distortion steams like rain on Times Square neon. Also emerging from the mire is a guitar riff reminiscent of Cyndi Lauper's "Time After Time." The anticipation for Fennesz's upcoming album, *Venice*, just keeps getting worse. *Cameron Macdonald*

FROST MELODICA
Shadow/US/CD

Frost is Aggie E. Peterson and Per Martinsen, aided in part by fellow Norwegian duo Røyksopp. No work is quite as animated as Røyksopp's apex, "Eple" (though the tightly wound clickhouse spring of "Running Boy" nears in approach), but that amount of distraction wouldn't complement Peterson's Dido-ish vocals, which benefit from a gently flowing, multi-hued wrap of crystalline tones. A song such as "Half-Whole" uses melodic chords as delicate and wavering as the skin of a wind-rippled reflecting pool. Martinsen's beats are more straightforward, calculated blip-pop (popular to listeners of Morr Music), and allow Peterson's effervescent vocals a pane on which to condense. *Melodica* encapsulates the comfort of a sweater-weather keeper. *Tony Ware*



HER SPACE HOLIDAY
THE YOUNG MACHINES
Mush/US/CD
With his third proper full-length (his first for Mush), Her Space Holiday composer Marc Bianchi has gone from charmingly earnest to brutally honest. On several tracks Bianchi comes across as pretty damn twee'd off, as vindictive as a man who breathily emotes over spacey synth 'n' sample symphonics can be. The string-swept sleepy grooves—several chirping stutters more popular in the wake of the Postal Service debut—are not so far removed from previous material as to render the album unrecognizable, but the bed sheets in which Bianchi tosses have turned noticeably frigid. *The Young Machines* is a break-up but not break-down record, a captivating coping mechanism for those who can appreciate dream-pop mope-hop. *Tony Ware*

HIEROGLYPHICS FULL CIRCLE
Hiero Imperium/US/CD

Having cleared the decks of solo albums and side projects, the legendary Hiero crew reconvenes to drop its latest family offering. *Full Circle* makes it abundantly clear that Hiero can still sling syllables with the best of them—Del and Pep Love in particular shine bright-

ly on every track they grace. However, the album is undermined by lame hooks and hit-or-miss production; sampling laws have not been kind to the crew, as getting super-choppy is not a Hiero forté. For every poor track ("Shift Shape"), there's at least one heater ("Classic"), so overall, the album succeeds more than it fails. But it's not exceptional. *Pete Babb*

I:CUBE I:CUBE 3
Versatile/FRA/CD

The French might find themselves in political disfavor with the US at the moment, but there's no question that their house music underground continues to outshine most of the world. Gilb'r's Versatile imprint offers a strong case in point—it's home to veteran producer Nicolas "I:Cube" Chaix, unquestionably one of the greatest finds of our electronic age. The eclectic *I:Cube 3* moves from house to hip-hop and even folksy acoustic, but Chaix binds it all together with a masterful understanding of rhythm that recalls another French great, Laurent Garnier. Check "Oblivion" to hear Chaix's trademark knock for piercing lounge atmospheres with taut deep house, and the whimsical "Vacuum Jackers," which suddenly closes with the sound of a vacuum cleaner turning off. Stunning. *Janet Tzou*



JEAN F. COCHOIS ELECTRONIQUE LOVE
NORMAN FELLER
FRAMELESS STRUCTURE
Elektrolux/GER/CD
Timewriter's *Diary of a Lonely Sailor* was one of the strongest house music offerings of 2002, and Jean F. Cochois' newest full-length (released under his real name) displays the same kind of lush ambient atmospheres that made *Diary* so unforgettable. *Electronique Love* finds Cochois abstracting his supple production to a dreamy soundscape that knows neither direction nor style, ambling loosely into slumberland's most nebulous atmospheres. More compelling is Cochois's labelmate Terry Lee Brown's newest downtempo full-length (released under Brown's real name, Norman Feller), which recalls the most sublime moments of his impeccable tech-house sets, with supple pieces like "Rising Star" finding a quiet, restorative calm amidst the gentle swirls of an ambient snare. *Janet Tzou*

JEDI MIND TRICKS VISIONS OF GANDHI
Babygrande/US/CD

Jedi Mind Tricks makes you feel like a pussy. Like fellow "raw rap" purveyors M.O.P. and Pharoahe Monch, the Philly-based duo of Stoupe and Vinnie Paz (former JMT member Jus Allah had beef, so he bounced) deliver an aural ferocity not unlike a pit bull on Red Bull. Stoupe's thick, Latin-laced beats bulldoze a path for Vinnie's fiery, execution-style flow: "I'll peel the top of your fucking face off/Like an orange/And I'll eat the carnage." Exhausting, exhilarating shit here—if you can stomach it. *Carleton Curtis*

JOHN TEJADA & ARIAN LEVISTE THE DOT & THE LINE
Moods And Grooves/US/CD

Motor City-influenced John Tejada might be the most unlikely resident of LA's electronic scene. His newest album with longtime co-producer Arian Leviste offers classic Tejada tech-house stylings: smooth, lean grooves swiped with breakbeats, catchy loops and very clean production. As might be expected, some tracks are better suited as DJ mixing material, such as the driving "Brio," which offers great jacking house grooves that don't move in any particular direction. Standout cuts include the riveting "Stereographic Mix

Up," a hypnotizing exercise in strapping minimalism, and "Language Barrier," which dissolves upbeat stabbing synths into moody, melodic techno. Check the old-school Detroit vibe of "Throwback," which keenly hearkens to Tejada's more appropriate musical home. *Janet Tzou*

JOL MOODY AOW
April/DEN/CD

Outlandish yet accessible, conceptual yet tangible, *Moody Aow* is a bamboozling, paradoxical collection of sleazy upbeat down-beat cuts that confirms Jol's reputation as a talented beat technician and multi-instrumentalist. "Spirit Of Pyrinee" looks to the mountains for inspiration, as liquid keys jam with aggrieved strings that conceal a terrible secret. "Cool Cat" is a fitting name for a majestic, vibraphone-laced grooving cut. "Kids In The Song" is an effortlessly cheerful number, with light-hearted keys, appealing clarinet and individualistic bass guitar. *Moody Aow* exudes a good-natured amiability that walks arm in arm with the album's sinister undertones. *Jon Freer*



KABIR FUEL FOR THE FIRE
Uncle Trouble/US/CD
Clean, clear and crisp are Kabir's rhymes, delivered with intensity and intelligence. The Boston MC kicks the valiant underground tell-it-like-it-is vibe that falls somewhere between Dilated Peoples and Mr. Lif. His style actually bears an almost uncanny resemblance to Oakland-bred MC Azeem, a mouthful of carefully placed and enunciated rhymes born from spoken word days. The music behind him likewise inspires a range of moods, from heavy stepping to straight-up breakbeat thump. Like most of the rappers in this vein, the intensity can be wearing at the same time it's admirable. *Jon Weldon*

KITBUILDERS WAKE UP (MODULE VERSION)
S.H.A.D.O. Electro/ITA/CD

Some say rock 'n' roll will never die, but electro could outlast even that hoary beast. Spawned in the early '80s, this robotically funky style continues to enchant young producers, including Köln's Kitbuilders (Benway and Ripley). *Wake Up* originally surfaced in 2001, but reappears here with two bonus remixes of the title track by BolzBolz. Keen students of Kraftwerk's *Computer World*, Giorgio Moroder, D.A.F. and the *Liquid Sky* soundtrack, Kitbuilders applies recent electronica's glitch fetish to surprisingly durable '80s synth settings. Ripley's female vocals evoke obligatory anomie and snottiness, but the music's edginess and weird textures help it transcend electroclash ennui. *Dave Segal*

KRAFTWERK TOUR DE FRANCE SOUNDTRACKS
Astralwerks/US/CD

Kraftwerk are surrounded by more myths than the Bible and the *Odyssey* combined, which makes it difficult to approach the group as if one had never heard of them or their music. Such is the wholly original sound of this album, that if heard without prior knowledge of Kraftwerk, one could imagine these tracks as a radical new movement in the history of electronic music. Even the reworkings of "Tour De France" are so thorough and shot through with tingling, dawn-treader synth chords that the piece sounds entirely novel. The album never loses its forward momentum, and could teach a lot of younger artists what electronics can do. This *could* have been a bloated, embarrassing, middle-aged record. Instead, it's the beginning of an open quest. *Tim Haslett*



Two Banks of Four

TWO BANKS OF FOUR
THREE STREETS WORLD
Red Egyptian Jazz/UK/CD
Despite the disdain showered upon acid jazz's chin bearded-and-knit capped devotees, the scene has left us with some prolific artists. Producer Demus (of early '90s UK soul act Young Disciples) and Rob Gallagher (Galliano) are two that have gone on to produce solid work with the likes of Koop, Zero 7 and Jazzanova. On their second full-length as 2BO4, the pair, joined by vocalists like Bembe Segue and Valerie Etienne, brings forth an album full of accomplished jazz-tinged soul that successfully avoids ponderous pretension. With a seriously yet warm timbre and loping chords that recall late-Sixties-era Yusef Lateef, *Three Streets World* has an intimate tone that reveals more with repeated listens. The album is full of heartfelt playing from seasoned veterans like Ski Oakenfull and Chris Bowden, and shines when 2BO4 avoid too much drama, as on the simple but effective "Angel's Walk" or the rolling title track. *Peter Nicholson*



LES GEORGES LENINGRAD
DEUX HOT DOGS MOUT ARDE CHOU
Blow The Fuse/CAN/CD
The only obvious move made by Montreal quartet Les Georges Leningrad on *Deux Hot Dogs* is their cover of the Residents' "Constantinople." The disc's 12 remaining tracks scuttle through outsider music's oddest zones with demented-ghlee. This is invigorating idiot savant-garde subversion, as if Blectum From Blechdom embraced No Wave, Brit rock underground circa 1980 (Fall, Swell Maps, Banshees), Half Japanese, Sun Ra and Nurse With Wound. LGL's lo-fi production seems to emanate from Pluto, their female vocals from loony bins; their guitars, organs and electronics splinter, ululate and squeal, reaching warped frequencies designed to drive music teachers mad. Weird up. *Dave Segal*

LISTENER WHISPERMOON
Mush/US/CD
ATL's full of hip-hop, but Listener differentiates himself from the rest of the Georgia contenders with his debut, *Whispermoon*. Gritty, dirty, raw and minimal beats cleave to a weighty sound somewhat reminiscent of Illios in its production excellence and sometimes not-so-excellent lyrics. While Listener bares his all in a poetic onslaught of insightful words, his vocal stream can be somewhat forced, tripping unnaturally through an otherwise smooth flow. *Sara Jayne Crow*

LYRICS BORN LATER THAT DAY
Quannum Projects/US/CD
Former Latyrx MC Lyrics Born has built a funhouse of funk called *Later That Day*, melding hip-hop backbeats with soul shine, funk grit and straight up rock. Lyrics Born twists his unique voice over and around the rhythms, bouncing from West Coast straight rhymes to dancehall toasting to triple-time spoken word. A rocket opening peaks with the tremendous anthem "Callin' Out" and yields to a slow spot of dull skits, but his team-up with Lateef the Truth Speaker on the slow-build vamp "Last Trumpet" recovers the momentum nicely. A bit more of the other Quannum MCs would have been great, but Lyrics Born has enough variety in his head and in his voice to carry the day. *Rob Geary*



VENUS MALONE PRETTY ON THE INSIDE
Groove Attack/GER/CD
Columbus, OH native/Munich transplant Venus Malone gives you an authorized copy of her diary key on her first LP. Cuts like "Phat A55" and "Best Inspiration" display an easy confidence with sonic sex appeal to spare, but it's the unflinching vulnerability of "One on One," "Cliché," and "Eye on the Prize" that make her truly irresistible: "Even when my notes are wrong when I sing my songs, I have no pride, I wanna tell you all that's inside." The beats on the album range from lush to soulful to banga, thanks to producers Christian Höck and fellow Ohio natives J. Rawls and Fat Jon. *Ross Hogg*

MATMOS THE CIVIL WAR
Matador/US/CD
Matmos's bouts of tomfuckery—like recording the scrapes of a rhinoplasty operation, or a duet between an electric guitar and a bucket of oatmeal—all deserve a prize. In *The Civil War*, they attempt a musical time warp between the English and American

civil wars. It's a near-sequel to their 1999 peyote 'n' jimson weed-laced trip, *The West*, with its banjos, fiddles and dobro guitars. However, things are "civil" here, where Weather Channel-friendly country-folk abounds. Fortunately, "Regicide," and "Z.O.C.K." both imitate the joy of Puritans kicking around King Charles I's head, while "Pelt and Holler" is vintage Matmos with its DSP mutation of a rabbit pelt into a maracas-like shaker. *Cameron Macdonald*

ALTON MILLER SONGS FROM BOHEMIA
Peacefrog/UK/CD
He doesn't have a profile as high as Detroit innovators such as Derrick May and Carl Craig, but this long player shows that Alton Miller has forged a distinct sound. "Songs From Bohemia" focuses on deeper grooves, similar to those of Moodymann and fellow maverick emotion manipulator Theo Parrish. "Something For You" is a generous offering, with troubled synths, stunning keys and appealing strings. "No Goodbyes" tearfully refuses to let go, as spine-chilling synths, inflexible beats and slanted brass wedges combine. The trouble with this collection is that many cuts are influenced by similar ideals and utilize similar instrumentation, but with compositions as gorgeous as these, it's a fault that can be overlooked. *Jon Freer*



MOON ORCHESTRA YOU'LL KNOW WHEN YOU GET THERE
Dbut/NOR/CD
Moon Orchestra makes music for chill travelers and dramatic soundtracks to extreme lounging and dreams of a perfect getaway. "Moving on Out" sets the mood, and even though the tempo pushes, full strings and a floating guitar loop mesmerize more than excite. The slow luminescence of "Eastern Lights" leisurely culminates in a driving rhythm with forward dub influences. Jon Platou Selvig's splendid blend of jazz sensibilities and relaxing atmospheres conjure in-between-adventure times, with preludes of spy-oriented tension ("the Valley") that lead to light Latin fun ("Mystic Brew") and bursts of calm stasis ("Sorcery"). A nice little trip for sure, with a pleasant view and enough changes along the way to make it worth the while. *Rob Riddle*

PETE MOSS IN YOUR DREAMS
Aloha/UK/CD
East Coast DJ and producer Pete Moss makes a solid debut in the production realm with *In Your Dreams*, an impressive blend of stripped-down house and sensual deep sounds. Emphasizing spaced-out dubby beats, eloquent funk-out synthesizers, groove-riden basslines and crisp, snappy snares, Moss's music is so silky smooth, you don't even notice he's moved on to the next track until you're halfway through the disc (all of the 10 original tracks are mixed like a DJ set). Moss, who has released several tracks on the Philadelphia label Ovum, produces quality house music with enough Philly-inspired soul to keep you moving on the dancefloor. *Tim Pratt*

MUSLINGAUZE ARABBOX
Soleilmoon/US/CD
HOME OF THE ROCK
Ant-Zen/GER/CD
Muslimgauze (Manchester producer Bryn Jones) passed away in 1999, but he's been just as prolific dead as he was alive. The onslaught continues with these reissues from 1993, when Muslimgauze was seething over the first US-Iraq war and releasing sonic protests nearly every month. *Arabbbox* sounds positively tranquil and minimalist compared to Jones's later, more densely

layered and rhythmically powerful work. The beats are simple and slow, mere backdrops to the ominous tamboura drones and morose minor-key synth melodies. You can live without this. *Dome Of The Rock* fares slightly better, conjuring hypnotic, tense soundscapes teeming with militant tablas, Doppler-effected drones and tiny bells—*Dome* is a strong intro to his early style. *Dave Segal*

NON-PROPHETS HOPE
Lex/UK/CD
Fans of poet/rapper extraordinaire Sage Francis should be ready to see another side of their talented hero. With partner Joey Beats on production, the usually self-reflective/self-deprecating (dare we say emo?) Anticon recording artist shows his hardcore b-boy side, with clever, crowd-pleasing couplets flowing with ease over dope beats. "Well I'm your typical hip-hop political figure/ I'm not left wing or right wing/ I'm the middle finger," raps Sage on "Damage." Each track brims with double entendres and word play, and comedy is abundant. Classic hip-hop tracks are referenced, mainstream rap is mocked, science is dropped and wack emcees are put in their place. *DJ Anna*

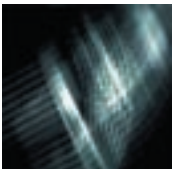
OMID MONOLITH VILLAIN ACCELERATE MAID OF GOLD
Mush/US/CD
LA's deservedly ballyhooed Mush Records dishes out some choice producer-centered hip-hop with a pair of releases by Omid and the duo Villain Accelerate. On *Monolith*, Omid's chameleon-like production is the bedrock over which a slew of talented underground emcees spin multifarious tales of angst, defiance and cheeky irreverence. It's hard to quibble with the results, which range from the somber elegance of Hymnal to the hip-pop eccentricities of Buck 65 or Mush-motormouth Busdriver. Villain Accelerate (the duo of Sixtoo and Stigg of the Dump) make their debut with *Maid of Gold* (terrible title, but a pretty swell bit of instrumental hip-hop), where they seamlessly mix dark, flowing beats with a bevy of eccentric concrete-ish sonics. Not revolutionary, but well-sorted nonetheless. *Susanna Bolle*



PEPE DELUXE BEATITUDE
Emperor Norton/US/CD
Finnish duo Pepe Deluxe has returned with a perplexingly good record. *Beatitude* starts throwing hooks and surprises right out of the starting blocks: "Just Let Go" is an amiable funk warm-up, then "Salam Fever" tears a hole in the speaker with snarling guitars and a weird processed vocal growl. By mid-album, they're constructing moody beatscapes complete with ethereal female vocals, wacky organ rave-ups, and '60s soul workouts like "Girl!" There's even a backyard party with shout-along Spanish vocals ("Vamos Muchachos") to wrap it up. Pepe Deluxe's energy and disrespect for genre orthodoxy makes this willfully eclectic mess all hang together. *Rob Geary*

PHTHALOCYANINE ABOUT THIS PRODUCT "TRASH ART"
Phthalo/US/CD
Like the early *Zacks* EP and 2000's *25 Tracks Fer 1 Track* on Planet Mu, Phthalocyanine's *About* embraces experimental sound while shunning the academic. So you must either crave massive levels of dada bass, feedback and static that struggle in tandem to adopt physical form, or revel in complex sample overlays enrap in the drama of culling meaning from their imploded sonic imprint in order to get past the album's caustic exterior. It's a battle royale between chaotic noise and musical structure, one so exquisite it'll make your ass hurt. *Heath K. Hignight*

THE RAPTURE ECHOES
DFA-Strummer/US/CD
Not since the Stone Roses unleashed *Fools Gold* in 1989 on a world waiting for Anglo dance catharsis has a band been so hailed as the future for fusing the aesthetics of rock and the discotheque. As such, the timing of the release of The Rapture's "House of Jealous Lovers" single was undeniable. And now, after pages and pages of hype, we have the album. Unsurprisingly, *Echoes* is ambitious in scope and accomplished in style. Tracks like "Olio," which sounds like The Cure reworked by 808 State, and "Heaven," which once again plunders Gang of Four sans social critique, deliver exactly what you'd expect. The album's oddity—the Bowie-esque "Open Up Your Heart"—offers the only unexpected treat. Even so, it's hard not to feel every song is transparent in its postured mimicry. *Echoes* is far from unpleasing, but it seems we should expect a bit more from the future than Karaoke at the No Wave runway. *Alexis Georgopoulos*



RECHENZENTRUM DIRECTOR'S CUT
Mille Plateaux/GER/CD+DVD
The pleasures in German multimedia collective Rechenzentrum's music aren't to be found in the structure-shifting, ambient dub-techno configurations long familiar from generations of German electronic music—but in the details, where pianos drizzle over grayscale waveform mountain ranges, rumbling bass wreaks seismic havoc, and scraps of melody flit across the sound field like radio transmissions in search of a way home. It sounds a bit like a distillation of the last five years of glitch techno—except, curiously, much better than the sum of its parts. There's a depth and a richness here that's absent from most laptop wankery; instead of silicon myopia, Rechenzentrum's perspective looks past the motherboard and out onto a world of startling life and color. *Philip Sherburne*



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PHUTURISTIX FEEL IT OUT
Hospital/UK/CD
Hospital has a taste for all things uplifting, from High Contrast's glossy new wave drum & bass, to Landslide's bouncy breaks. Two-step master and outer-London resident Zed Bias and his Manchester-based cohort DJ Injekta's debut album continues in this tradition. *Feel It Out* is infused with soulful, smart vocals, be it the deft lyrics of MC Mayhem or Uncut frontwoman Jenna G's tenor. Both crescendo over ebullient jazzy horn sections and garage-driven handclaps, culminating in irresistible tracks like "Beautiful" and "Sweet Journey." The album as a whole, though, delivers more than the elevating tunes: the cleverly-named standout "Thelonius Punk" has sexy basslines rumble alongside choppy breaks, epitomizing the surgical treatment these guys have just given both UK garage and the Hospital label itself. *Jenn Marston*



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WARD 21 U KNOW HOW WE ROLL *Greensleeves/UK/CD*
WAYNE MARSHALL MARSHALL LAW *VP/US/CD*
Second albums can be a tricky affair, but no such worries for Jamaica’s maddest and baddest crew. Taking up where 2001’s acclaimed *Mentally Disturbed* left off, this latest effort sees Ward 21’s young crew—Andre “Suku” Gray, Ranaldo “Rumblood” Evans, Kunley McCarthy and Mark “Mean Dog” Henry—further develop their avant-garde approach to dance-hall. Full of recent hits such as “Petrol,” “Something About Her” and “Coochie Zone,” Ward 21’s signature sense of schizoid tension flows through *U Know How We Roll*. From tracks offering responsible social commentary that butt-up against gun talk, to old reggae standards bubbling under greasy, synthetic basslines and glass-like rhythms, this record is one mass of contradictions—but boy, are they glorious. Full of surprises (like Bounty Killer’s guest spot “Badda Than Dat,” which even includes Highland bagpipes) and generous digital innovation, one can only wonder where this foursome will go next. Meanwhile, *Marshall Law*, singjay Wayne Marshall’s debut LP, is somewhat less frenetic but no less accomplished. Marshall’s silken R&B harmonies enhance the slick production of tracks such as “Natural Mystic” and “Ghetto People” (featuring Assassin) and contrast with his masterful version of the Diwali riddim, “Overcome,” and also the uptempo party flavor of “Why” (a collaboration with red-hot MC Vybz Kartel). With two similarly strong releases coming from the scene, reggae’s run of form shows no sign of letting up. *Dave Stelfox*

URSULA RUCKER SILVER OR LEAD *IK7/GER/CD*
This Philly native’s sophomore album has an admirable aural scope, featuring beats from respected producers in the fields of nu-jazz (Jazzanova), house (Li! Louie Vega) and hip-hop (The Roots). Rucker’s poetics are consistently incisive, testifying to the black female experience in these turbulent times. The standout track here is “Untitled Flow,” wherein the vocalist rides King Britt’s echo-laden electro backing and defiantly reminds us that her “rhyme is sweet but deadly.” Maybe so, but Rucker’s phrasing is frustratingly uniform, devoid of riddimological quirks and emotional inflection. In Foxy Brown’s hands, Rucker’s revolutionary words would uplift the masses. *Martin Turenne*

JANEK SCHAEFER SKATE/RINK *AudiOH!-Staalplaat/ UK-NETH/LP-3” CD*
One look at the scarred surface of *Skate* and you know this is no ordinary LP. In an effort to confound phonographs everywhere, UK sound artist and turnablist Janek Schaefer has carved deep concentric gouges into the vinyl. With every play of the record, your stylus takes another torturous path, creating different patterns of hiss, pop and scratch. The record is most interesting when you forego normal playback and manually isolate patterns by varying speed or creating loops. On the companion 3-inch CD, *Rink*, Schaefer does just this, playing the record on his custom triphonic turntable, focusing on specific stuttering phrases, and mixing the sounds with ambient noise. Compelling, but not for the passive listener. *Susanna Balle*

SHUT UP AND DANCE RECLAIM THE STREETS *Shut Up and Dance/UK/CD*
PJ and Smiley practically invented jungle. Alongside such epochal tracks as 4hero’s “Mr. Kirk’s Nightmare” and “Narra Mine” by Genaside II, early SUAD releases, such as “5,6,7,8,” from 1989, defined a genre. PJ and Smiley, with their longstanding partner DJ Hype (who’s had an illustrious solo career), never disappeared though they did vanish from popular memory. Their latest album, on their longstanding eponymous label, is yet another sweltering excursion into the depths of Hoxton, best heard on an ear-bleeding Jamaican sound system at 2am. The phenome-

non of raggacore à la DJ Scud, The Bug, di/rupture, Soundmurderer and SK-1 would not be possible without the ingenious music of the Shut Up and Dance posse. *Tim Haslett*

SIDEWINDER RESOLUTION *Fenetik/UK/CD*
Fenetik is the downtempo offshoot of highly vaunted house label Soma, and Sidewinder is otherwise known as Alan Bryden, one of Fenetik’s earliest artist signings. Seeing how this debut was nearly five years in the making, avid trainspotters might better recognize the name from appearances on compilations by labels like Naked Music, Universal Jazz and Guidance. On most of the album, squelchy synths and elastic basslines quiver on top of occasionally soporific horn solos. Sidewinder’s finest moments are on songs where the funk is placed at the forefront—but unfortunately some of these tracks veer dangerously towards that dodgiest of downtempo sub-genres: “dad jazz,” something your 50-year-old father would nod along approvingly to. *Brock Phillips*

SPIRITUALIZED AMAZING GRACE *Sanctuary Records/US/CD*
MEDICINE THE MECHANICAL FORCES OF LOVE *Astralwerks/US/CD*
Fans of slippery, expansive guitar rock had plenty to be happy about in the ‘90s, as Brad Laner’s *Medicine* played feedback-laden pop, while Jason Pierce’s *Spiritualized* took minimalist drone-rock into new, often symphonic territory. Laner teams up with Shannon (daughter of Bruce!) Lee as the revived *Medicine*, using software chops in concert with Lee’s soulful vocals. The new approach pays off on “I M Yrs,” which blends a straightforward beat with shimmering synths, buzzing effects and Lee’s sweetly romantic singing. *Amazing Grace* goes live instead, finding Pierce and his band ripping through 11 expansive compositions with minimal overdubs. *Rob Geary*

SUNSPOT JONZ DON’T LET ‘EM STOP YOU *Battle Axe/CAN/CD*
While Mystik Journeymen/Living Legends crewmember Sunspot Jonz’s latest offering may be peppered with tales of angst and heartache (on “There She Go” he laments a love lost, and on

“Broken Wing World” he portrays himself as “an angel with a broken wing”), he’s still the same Jonz that’s been an underground king for years. His quirky style is augmented by Living Legends PSC, Eligh, The Grouch and Scarub, as well as Moka. Only of Swollen Members. If you’ve never been a Journeymen/Legends fan, this record probably won’t convert you, but if you’re among their legion of hardcore followers, you won’t be disappointed. *Ross Hogg*

SUSHIROBO THE LIGHT-FINGERED FEELING OF SUSHIROBO *Pattern 25/US/CD*
Spurning all that cheating with software, Seattle’s effects-heavy four-piece Sushirobo starts with late ’70s art-punk aesthetics, layering modern pop/rock hooks, oddball tones and dub headiness. Frontman Arthur Roberts (ex-Posies) delivers esoteric lyrics in a voice that recalls Soul Coughing’s M. Doughty. Though nearly every song has an unconventional structure culled from jam-style recording sessions, the experiment works best when grounded by steady beats, catchy vocals and incidental effects, as with highlight “Talk Show.” At times it’s hard to see the rock show forest for the twisted trees, but Sushirobo gets credit for sticking to the fringe on its second full-length. *Liz Cordingley*

THE KARMINSKY EXPERIENCE INC THE POWER OF SUGGESTION *ESL Music/US/CD*
Tipping fezzes to Henry Mancini, The Karminsky Experience Inc. writes the soundtrack to a sexy, escapist, psychedelic-fueled jaunt into sitar funk territory. Not surprisingly, this London duo has DJed for Hugh Hefner, Russ Meyer, Ken Kesey and Burt Bacharach. Imagine a composite of those dashing dudes and you have the Karminsky leading man. Dodging an all-out kitsch-fest, ...*Suggestion* is a concerted effort to score the imaginary protagonist’s Istanbul adventures through bouts of “Belly Disco,” a run-in with “The Hip Sheik,” and mysteries “Behind the Bamboo Curtain.” It succeeds with all the Eames-furnished spy lounge appeal we’ve come to expect from ESL. *Liz Cordingley*

THE PROCUSSIONS AS IRON SHARPENS IRON *Basementalism/US/CD*
Ay yo, Pro’s are no joke! Colorado boys now residing in Los Angeles, producer/MC Stro the 89th Key and MC Resonant rhyme alongside Mr. J, who sounds like a young Mike D (Beastie Boys). From the minute you pop this CD on, you can feel how hype these cats are. “We Gotta” is a Rhodes-induced soul hip-hop track reminiscent of early Common joints like “I Used To Love H.E.R.” “Move Yer Self” is a sweet bossanova excursion followed by “Track #10,” a bugged out interlude where they parody C&C Music Factory. At times, the lyrics don’t really hit you upside the head—these MCs don’t have that classic feel yet, but give them time. If y’all like your hip-hop positive, the kind of thing that you can smoke an L to while watching the sun rise, then this album’s for you. *DJ Daz*

TWINE *Ghostly International/US/CD*
With no cute cartoon cats or birds anywhere to be seen, Ghostly lays bare the cavernous depths of its spiralingly intense inner soul on this frighteningly stunning album. Drenched in echoing, eerie elements, saved from solipsism by startling sheaths of shimmering sound surges, Twine benefits from its singular approach to electronic music, where no clear reference points emerge. While some may be quick to proclaim terms like “glitch” or “IDM” from behind the imperial high horse of their record shop register, Twine seductively refutes them all with shimmering guitars, an enveloping electronic language and hazy female vocals. Essential. *Brion Paul*

VILLALOBOS ALCACHOFA *Playhouse/GER/CD*
Ricardo Villalobos left his native Chile for Germany ages ago to DJ and produce. He lands before us now on the cusp of a new techno—a techno that’s clean as the minimal sound of Thomas Brinkmann or Cabanne, yet more sculpted than John Tejada or Akufen. We got a taste of it earlier this year, when Villalobos released his comp CD *Taka Taka* on Cocoon, but the real goods are on *Alcachofa*. Villalobos emphasizes the discreet space between individual sounds, resulting in sonic depth unencumbered by time (e.g. Plastikman’s *Consumed*). It makes the digitized vocals on “Easy Lee” float spectrally over unrelenting techno rhythms. It mercilessly throws the glitch-like machinations of “Bahaha Hahi” off quaking bass. And it positions the longing pulse of “What You Say Is More Than I Can Say” as zeitgeist for modernity’s rapacious love affair with technology. Highly recommended. *Heath K. Hignight*

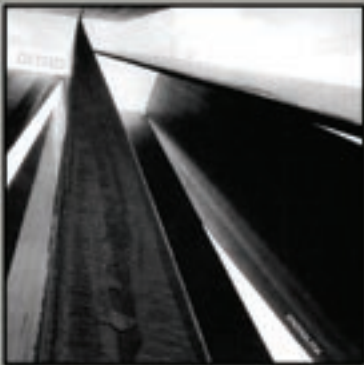
WILLIAMS LOVE CRISIS *Glasgow Underground/UK/CD*
Ah, novelty, wherefore art thou? William Threlfall has moved beyond the usual lackluster and well-traveled 4/4 margins with *Love Crisis*. Threlfall builds his sound with micro-sampling instead of culling full loops, a production style that thankfully tends toward polyrhythmic complexity. Cowbells and big band instrumentation augment hi-hat hand claps while the beats ride on an undertow of strapping bass. Meanwhile, cut-up slipper-slappity soul is fed through the sonic sieve. Rolling melodics are interspersed throughout, creating (gasp!) novelty within the soul-house sound. *Sara Jayne Crow*

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Astor Piazzolla

ASTOR PIAZZOLLA REMIXED
Milan Records/ US/ CD

It takes two to tango, and this superb compilation proves that even if the two are separated by several decades and a few oceans, the music can still be magic. Organized by Jean Christophe Chamboredon for Milan Records, a Los Angeles label specializing in soundtracks, *Astor Piazzolla Remixed* pulls together a rich collection of artists known for their open-border approach to production, and lets them loose with the original master tapes of Argentinean composer Astor Piazzolla.

Piazzolla was born in Argentina in 1921, but spent his first fourteen years in New York, where he began to play the *bando-neon*, the distinctive accordian-like instrument characteristic of the tango, while soaking up the huge array of music available. Piazzolla's own music was something of a remix project before the phrase, for upon his return to Argentina, he combined elements of jazz, classical and folk to forge "nuevo tango," much to the dismay of some of his contemporaries who did not want anyone toying with their national dance. Fortunately, Piazzolla ignored his critics, and went on to create a massive body of work filled with a passion that continues to inspire others 10 years after his death.

"Not only is it an honor to remix Astor Piazzolla [but] I'm lucky to be in the company with all of the other great producers and

composers on this project," said Detroit-LA native John Beltran (Ubiquity, Transmat), whose hypnotic re-rub of "Revirado" features light production to great effect, letting strings swirl mysteriously around a looped *bandoneon* flourish. The list of artists who contributed is somewhat astounding—4Hero, Alexkid, Nickodemus and Osiris, Koop, Osunlade and more, although a rumored turn by MAW's Little Louie Vega apparently fell through.

The most successful tracks are those that bring to the fore Piazzolla's underlying melancholy and hint of menace, as Fantasista does with "Resurrección del Angel." Fantasista, a.k.a. Toshio Matsuura of United Future Organization, takes two drawn-out cello notes and wrings them for all they're worth, building tension with ominous drums before lacing the breakdown with slightly dissonant *bandoneon*. Nu Spirit Helsinki take a similarly dramatic approach to "Verano Porteño," filling it with haunted spaces and brushes that stalk over drum heads like dancers across a ballroom.

Though *Astor Piazzolla Remixed* is not an unmitigated success (John Arnold's "Calambre" is a bit fey, and Ricochet's "Duo de Amor" plods along dully) neither was Piazzolla's *oeuvre*, for mistakes are inevitable if one dares to take chances. For listeners in search of timeless passion interpreted by some of today's most inventive producers, *Astor Piazzolla Remixed* is a sure bet. *Peter Nicholson*

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FEEDBACK TO THE FUTURE
Mobile/GER/CD

With the ubiquitous resurgence of guitars in electronic music (yes, we see you Morr Music) and the ten years of silence required before the celebratory reviving of a dead genre, it's time to tousle your hair, sling your guitar carpal tunnel-inducingly low and start shoegazing. Wryly named by music journalist Steve Sutherland after the bands' penchant for introspective live shows, shoegazing preceded Brit Pop's new optimism with walls of guitar feedback, amorphous floating vocals and subdued melancholy. Through their dense aural soakings, these bands shifted music's propulsiveness from the drummer's backbeat to the intricacies of sound, with devastating effect. This compilation, lovingly remastered by Pole, does an inimitable job of compiling the more notable moments from shoegaze's heyday, including Ride's "Like a Daydream," Lush's "Deluxe" and Adorable's "Sunshine Smile." Sigur Rós don't seem so great now, do they? *Brion Paul*

ANTHOLOGY OF NOISE AND ELECTRONIC MUSIC: 1936-2003
Sub Rosa/BEL/CD

Guy-Marc Hinant has serious balls to throw a Captain Beefheart spoken word track in among a score of pioneering *musique concrète*, feedback and drone composers in his latest "a-chronology" for Sub Rosa. Here, 30- to 50-year-old compositions by wildmen like Luc Ferrari, Morton Subotnick, Vladimir Ussachevsky and Otto Luening make featured new jacks Autechre and Scanner sound awfully ascetic. Other highlights: Daphne Oram's lucid harmonics, David Lynch protégé Alan R. Splet's *Eraserhead*-style refrigerator drones, and Laibach's factory tour of communist Yugoslavia. This comp will have you shaking hands with a few greats who were otherwise lost in the crowd's rush to kiss the feet of Cage and Stockhausen. *Cameron Macdonald*



COMPILASIAN: THE WORLD OF INDIPOP

Narada World/US/CD
Indipop—not Indian pop music, but a label that began more than 20 years ago—chronicles its surprisingly long career on *CompilAsian*, with cuts from as far back as 1981. Almost all prove far, far ahead of their time, with long thumping grooves and airy flutes that foreshadow all kinds of techno, ambient and worldbeat fusion. Each tune has Indian and Middle Eastern signifiers that give it an otherworldly ambience, all the while pushing forward with graceful, aggressive grooves. This is a vigorous presentation of a little-known but powerful imprint. *Jon Weldon*

DIS-JOINTED
Dis-Joint/US/LP

Your friendly neighborhood Groove Merchants Cool Chris and Vinnie Esparza come correct with this stellar comp. Given the depth of Chris and Vinnie's crates, this could have easily been an obscure record wank-a-thon. And while the cuts are pretty rare for the most

label's demo test kitchen, Yorkshire's Lamp Bar. We're talking trademarks—goeey atmospherics, exotic charm and vespertine intrigue abound. Banabila's "Vloeivoiz" stands out at the end of the disc with smooth horn work over curious downbeat textures. If your day-after ass is looking for some new no-nonsense hi-fi healin', *Dubplates* is what's for dinner. *Liz Cordingley*

E•A•D•G•B•E

12k/US/CD

Taylor Dupree's minimal electronic imprint 12k is late to the guitars 'n' DSP game, but the artists here gamely make up for lost time. As with all 12k releases, microcosmic subtlety and brainy design reign. Japanese duo Fonica forges chime-bient Frippertronic vistas of delicate beauty; Keith Fullerton Whitman (Hrvatski) unveils some tricks he learned from 20th century masters like Mimaroglu, Subotnick and Dockstader, with equilibrium-disturbing results; Frenchman Sébastien Roux creates spindly, meditative études that sound like Oval jamming with Loren Connors; and San Francisco's Christopher Willits envisions how indie rock *should* sound now, with tonally vibrant, whimsically tuneful songs that resonate emotionally and mesmerize like Steve Reich. *Dave Segal*

FABRIC LIVE: AMALGAMATION OF SOUNDZ
Fabric/UK/ CD

Take your time and do it right: The Amalgamation of Sounds takes that advice to heart on this slowly building mix disc. Setting off with a smooth mix of soundtrack styles (Nick Ingham Orchestra's "Heart Noir") and lazy beats (Sofalofa's "Pump Da Ball"), TAOS eventually picks up the pace with their own rework of Richard Davis's "Meaning" and RJD2's "Chicken Bone Circuit" before really kicking it off with some dark and pounding cuts from Hi-Lo and Soulték. Rather than an eclectic jumble, TAOS serves up a tasty buffet of beats held together by unremarkable blends but stellar programming. *Peter Nicholson*

FABRIC LIVE: BENT

Fabric/UK/CD

Fabric's latest installment by the current tweaked darlings of downbeat dance-pop, Bent, flows easily through rabid funk, stripped-down disco and cheeky house without missing a beat. While Bent's original work tends to fuel more sun-drenched afternoons on the beach than sweaty nights at the discotheque, they've managed to cobble together a diverse collection of tunes into a charmingly eclectic, uptempo mix featuring artists like Giorgio Moroder, Tim "Love" Lee, Fila Brazillia and Mr. Scruff. So creamy and filling are these sounds that, by the comp's end, I fully expect a waiter in a wide-lapel coat to be pushing a cart of dessert wines towards my table. *Christine Hsieh*



FESTIVAL IN THE DESERT

World Village/GER/CD

Simple, raw and repetitive in the best way, *Festival in the Desert* is about rhythmic repetition far removed from anything electronic. From hypnotic female vocal ticks to guitar throb deeply set in an African desert, the compilation is about translating the intense openness of the desert into music. Malian legend Ali Farka Toure and a range of other Malian and Mauritanian musicians bring their own guitar-laden traditions, and even Robert Plant—who somehow feels like a Western spokesman—makes a marvelous journey into eerie, bluesy emptiness. Sparse and compelling, this compilation thoroughly entertains through its spirit of simplicity. *Jon Weldon*

FUTURISTIC EXPERIMENTS #6

Background/GER/CD

Like Kompakt's *Total* series, Background's *Futuristic Experiments* installments always pair svelte microhouse with a healthy amount of playful experimentation. The 11 artists featured here, among them Ben Neville, B., Si-Cut.Db and label proprietor Andy Vaz, make for the series' finest hour yet. Akufen's "Red Skies" eschews his trademark cut-ups for a sub-aquatic French shuffle-house workout. Sutekh's stuttering "Keep Away" is paradoxically inviting, and Portable's "A Loop of Mass & Energy" loses the beat in favor of sub-bass ambient dub. Excellent. *Alexis Georgopoulos*

NETTLE: FIRECAMP STORIES REMIXES

The Agriculture/US/CD

Brooklyn's The Agriculture reaps a serious harvest with this remix album from Nettle, a duo comprised of DD and DJ/rupture. Rupture leaves behind his schizo plundering, but the impeccable taste remains intact: these *Firecamp Stories* remixes are intense and highly inventive reworkings that run the spectrum of granularity from Brooklyn pavement grit to North African dune shifts to acrid Spanish wind. "More Fire" is belly-swivels of techno dub are fleshed out immediately afterwards by Joseph Nothing's searing and symphonic desert-epic romance. An extremely well-executed adventure that sidesteps well-trod Muslimgauze terrain with immaculate shifts in texture. *Selena Hsu*

NOW AGAIN

Now Again/US/CD

LA's Stones Throw, purveyors of fine hip-hop music, introduces their funk reissue label Now Again. With previous releases like the celebrated *Funky 16 Corners* album, Breakestra's funk covers LP and various obscure 45s, the Stones Throw crew is no stranger to raw soul breaks. *Now Again* combines classic unearthed gems from groups like Soul Seven with brand new

bangers from the new generation of musicians like Connie Price and the Keystones. From the funky drum breakdown in Diplomatics' "Hum Bug" to the psychedelic soul sound of Ebony Rhythm Band's "Drugs Ain't Cool," this comp is nothing but quality material. Standouts include The Sand Dollars' far-out cover version of Donovan's "Get Thy Bearings" and the excellent soul-drenched sound of LA Carnival's "Blind Man." A must-have for crate diggers. *DJ Anna*



PARTY MONSTER

TVT/US/CD

Party Monster doles out that winning plot combo of nightlife and murder, based on the book and documentary *Disco Bloodbath*. Its soundtrack keeps pace, with tracks from the first wave of new wave, some big-sounding '80s pop fluff and offerings from the current "born-a-touch-too-late-to-catch-it-the-first-time" fit of electroclash. Old school alums include Stacey Q, Tones on Tail, Nina Hagen, ABC, and Shannon. Ladytron, Miss Kitten & The Hacker, Waldorf, Keoki and Felix da Housecat versus Pop Tarts (a.k.a. the actors in the film) dish the newstuff, along with Marilyn Manson as transsexual club star Christina (what a stretch!). *Stacy Meyn*



RED BUMB BALL

Pressure Sounds/UK/CD

Though it has, until now, enjoyed only a cult following in the US, rocksteady has many fierce devotees worldwide. And for good reason: as the precursor of roots reggae and the successor to ska, rocksteady presaged dancehall more than any other Jamaican music. The cavernous basslines of roots and dub had yet to enter the scene when these 22 tracks were recorded in the late 1960s. Instead, skeletal percussion, lithe organ chords and soulful vocals are at the center of the mix. Derrick Morgan, who would go on to a long roots career, appears on nine tracks here, his wavering voice making a powerful impression. The lineaments of reggae have always been about the dialectic between the celebratory and the mournful, and tracks like "Let Him Go" by The Viceroy's exemplify that wonderful aspect of rocksteady. *Tim Haslett*

REID SPEED: LIFE AFTER DARK

Breakbeat Science/US/CD

As she approaches a level of crossover appeal that escapes most drum & bass artists, Reid Speed unsurprisingly takes the catch-all approach on her current mix-project, *Life After Dark*. Maneuvering through nitty-gritty Dylan rinseouts as expertly as she bounces with Mathematics and Total Science rollers, Reid provides an instant snapshot of the scene from top to bottom with a nod to the dance-floor that is instantly contagious. While the mix may lack a level of cohesion to the expert eye, *Life After Dark* provides an ideal environment for potential neophytes to dig deeper into drum & bass arcana. *Chris Muniz*

RIDDIM DRIVEN: SCREAM

Riddim Driven: Wanted

VP/US/CD

Legendary producers Burro Banton and Bobby Konders combine on *Wanted*, a series of tracks featuring the Middle Eastern-tinged "Wanted" riddim. Highlights include T.O.K.'s vocoder-enhanced "Gal You Lead" and Mr. Easy's "Give Me," which has crossover potential with its smoothed-out, patois-free vocals, but the real gems are from longtime Konders collaborators Burro ("Money Friend") and King Kong, whose "Bag Juice" laments the youth's poor eating habits. Louis "Flabba" Malcolm (of the "Headache" and "Unstoppable" riddims) is back with *Scream*, classic bashment material. All the usual hardcore suspects are here: Sizzla's "There She Goes" features his gruff-voiced alter ego, and the ubiquitous Elephant Man does his inimitable thing. Both riddims are destined to mash up many a session. *Ross Hogg*

RISE ASHEN PRESENTS REFUEL-1

Fossil Fuel/CAN/CD

Music with a patriotic bent is rarely cool. It's mostly fondue—genuine sentiment goobed up by cheesy treatment—or too anthemic to be taken seriously. On his latest compilation, Canadian producer/DJ Rise Ashen uses a little intro here, a few maple leaves for album art there, and an all-Canadian artist line-up to subtly acknowledge where he's coming from without the cheddar. Out of the 12 tracks of house and nu-jazz with Afrobeat and Eastern influences, the jogging-yet-chill Nubeings (a play on the word Nubians) present the only overt nod to multiculturalism. A good flow and good vibes make this comp worthwhile. *Melissa Wheeler*

RUSSENDISKIO

Trikont/GER/CD

Ska, surf rock and punk-lite throw open the Iron Curtain in this collection of Russian bands playing in a Berlin club on an expat alternative tip. Ain't no cosmopolitan beats on this thing; its all weird, awkwardly deep vocals and endearingly clumsy fusions between a traditional Russian aesthetic (chock full of minor key horn oompas and accordions), indeterminate folkiness and swingin' ska. A refreshing take on the mixing of genres that might horrify the urban sophisticate within as your big toe taps in goofy polka time. *Selena Hsu*



SCHAFFELFEIBER 2

Kompakt/GER/CD

Kompakt's infatuation with *schaffel*—that loping swing rhythm that channels polka and "Spirit in the Sky" with the same syncopated breathlessness—is as old as the label itself. Once considered techno's awkward stepchild, it's recently achieved broader popularity, from T.Raumschmiere's "Monster Truck Driver" to Chicks On Speed's "Fashion." The Cologne label's second comp devoted to "shuffle fever" shows how versatile the bump-and-flummox can be. While Naum and Wighnomy Bros strip it down to buzzing, jerky gestures, and Superpitcher and SCSI-9 emphasize its anti-gravity pogo qualities, The Orb explores lapping whitecaps on "Cool Harbour" and Mikkell Metal takes a seafloor moonwalk. T.Raumschmiere's mix for Komeit finds utopia in a gliding gait, reminding, "*We could come here again/without pain.*" *Philip Sherburne*

SOUND IN COLOR

Sound in Color/US/CD

Sound In Color, a new label out of Southern California, introduces its artist roster with this compilation. Production veteran Mumbles takes the cake with "Preema's Dilemma," a wonderful Latin jazz composition that features his father on flute, uncles on trombone and trumpet and brother on the scratch—it's an exciting preview of his forthcoming LP. The booming bassline and dubbed-out trumpets of Bizarra & Boomnote's "Applied Pressure" are noteworthy, and Exile's "Ah Ouia" features a live trumpet over some bouncy MPC beats. Ricci Rucker is going to have a hard time escaping Prefuse 73 comparisons with the glitch funk sound of "Dirt," and GB's "Le Jazz" harkens back to the tame acid jazz sounds of the early '90s. Half standard jazzy cocktail hour fare and half truly interesting music, this compilation is a mixed bag. *DJ Anna*

THE FUTURE IS MY MELODY

Elektrulux-Milan/US/CD

German label Elektrulux churns out a healthy amount of mellow ambient-influenced chill-out and lounge music for the R&R set, most notably the *Space Night* late-night TV program and its corresponding audio soundtrack. *The Future Is My Melody* is the debut

installment of a new series, intent on showcasing the label's dreamy, vocal-oriented pop tunes. The album is definitely intent on creating atmosphere, highlighted by the silky sparse ambience of "Silur X Zeit" by Rescape, the luxurious vocals of Julia Messenger on PFL's "For The Love Of You" and Jean F. Cochois's tripped-out "Days, Weeks and Years." There are enough moments of heady bliss here to wipe away any doubts you might have about chillout pop tunes. *Tim Pratt*



THE MIC PLANET SESSIONS

Insomniac/US/CD

You can't step to the *Mic Planet*—it's a jam-packed party for a writer who stays at home and smokes too much. Overall, this compilation's lyrically, percussively and poetically solid. If alliterative phrases and a swank beat amount to sex appeal, then Breez Evahflowin' ("Mic Planet Session 101") and Styles of Beyond ("Atomic Zen") get the plays of the year award. Mystic flaunts her poetic steez in "Current Events," even if she gets her jollies knockin' the hustle. And for the record, Immortal Technique ain't no misogynist—he just likes to massage the word. *Rachel Swan*



TRIPLE DONS 1

Smugg/UK/CD

As the seemingly unending trend towards reissues of '70s reggae continues apace, Smugg releases a collection that new and seasoned fans alike are going to find difficult to resist. Horace Andy, Johnny Osbourne, and Frankie Paul are three of the greatest Jamaican vocalists of the last 30 years. Andy could sing the *Golden Girls* theme and draw tears from even the most casual listener. Osbourne has covered dozens of soul classics from Motown and Stax, among many other artists; his contributions here include the sublime "Juggling" and "Stand Good." It's Frankie Paul that makes this collection crucial, however, with his cover of "Now That I Found You" and the tingling and timely "Stop The War." *Tim Haslett*



DEEP CONCENTRATION 4
Om/US/CD

The series that began as a progressive turntablism compilation turns its focus back to the DJ's primary responsibility: the dancefloor. Sparo's "Bullit" captures all the excitement of a Steve McQueen car chase; the J. Boogie/People Under the Stairs combo "Movin' to My Beat" will have you doing just that, as will British scion DJ Format's "We Know Something You Don't Know" with Jurassic 5's Chali 2na and Akil. But it's Japan's DJ Tonk's "118" Hustle, a genre-crossing sure-shot, that club DJs will wear out, as well as "Something," a dynamic track from Oakland's Crown City Rockers. Scratch fiends can still get their fix from ex-X-ecutioner Mista Sinista, hot Bay Area talent DJ Zeph, and *LA Weekly's* best DJ of 2003, Haul. Overall, it's the most listenable (and danceable) DJ comp in years. Get ready to focus on these grooves. *Ross Hogg*



HOUSE GUEST REVIEWS:
ALTON MILLER
Folks have been sleeping on Alton Miller for far too long. Like many of Detroit's kids, Miller was raised in the '70s on Motown, the Philly Sound and Funkadelic. He hooked up with DJ pal Derrick May in the early '80s, inspired by the foundations laid down by Chicago masters like Ron Hardy and Frankie Knuckles. In the late '80s, alongside George Baker and Chez Damier, Miller ran the short-lived but scene-shaping Music Institute club night, which many point to as an influence on the global house

community. Trace the man's discography and you get a picture of Detroit house history. "Pleasure Baby" and "Dusk" on Serious Grooves/KMS, "Exstasoul" on Planet E, "Song of the Drum" on Moods & Grooves—these tunes made Motown jack 'til dawn. But he ain't through yet: following up his 2001 debut album, *Rhythm Exposed*, Miller's *Stories from Bohemia* on the UK's Peacefrog label sees him throw down some seriously diverse nu-soul business. It's back to world tours for this guy, so check what he's runnin'. *Ron Nachmann*

ANDRES MAHOGANI MUSIC EP *Mahogani Music/US/12*
This reminds of a time when most dance music was heard in your house and in clubs. This is a really nice EP, to say the least. Something about that 123 bpm gets me all teary-eyed and strolling down memory lane. Frankie at Gallery 21, Louie at Sound Factory Bar, Ron at the Music Box—what a time for music, eh? Anyway, Andres has the magic touch when it comes to putting the funk and roll into some groovy tracks. Get it while supplies last. *AM*

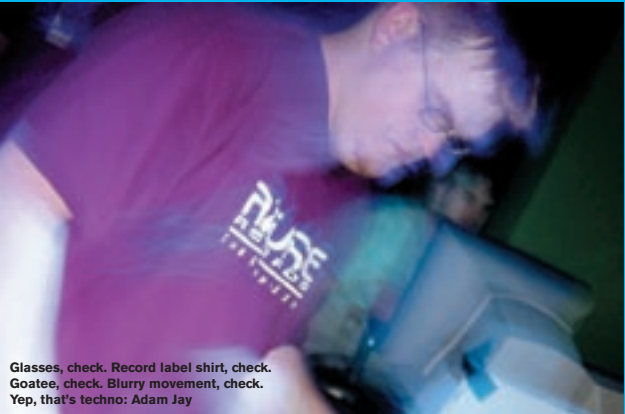
DJ POPE TRACKS FROM THE VATICAN IV *Track Mode/US/12*
Must-have, must-have, must-have!! I received this in the mail today, and not a minute too soon. The essence of underground culture on plastic. A dark but enlightening array of guitar, keyboards, drums and bass programmed with one thing in mind—to make you move. Basically, it's the lick. Check for it. *AM*

ONLY CHILD FEAT. AMP FIDDLER GOOD VIBES *Grand Central/UK/12*
Good vibes is what we need for sure. Only Child gets down on this soulful house piece with one of Detroit's best-kept secrets, Amp Fiddler, on vocals and other thangs. I first heard this on a mix CD by Norm Talley, and it blew me away—absolutely smooth as silk and fine as wine. *AM*

ASHEN & WALKER/BAW COLLECTIVE
MUSIC IN MY LIFE/NUBEINGS
Fossil Fuel/CAN/12
Ottawa baldy Rise Ashen and his man Trevor Walker get together with Frenchman Blissom for two tracks under different names for their forward-looking Fossil Fuel imprint. Ashen and Blissom give "Music in My Life" a hip-shaking Brazilian mix as ((Sambastate)) while boosting the original's propulsive bassline. The trio then goes Afro funk-house on the flip, letting vocalists Nick-E, Wawe and Dane-Jah-Rus growl and croon overhead. Afro-Latin madness from up north. *Ron Nachmann*

DJ PIERRE BREAK IT DOWN
Nite Grooves/US/12
Whatever happened to Chicago's Nathaniel Pierre Jones, the man who in 1986 tweaked a Roland 303 with his crew Phuture until he created "Acid Trax" and put dance music on the tongues of millions worldwide? Brother's still workin' it, as seen on this opaque follow-up to his springtime epic single, "Overcome." "Break It Down" offers some of his trademark warped "Wild Pitch" style over a filtered structure, with fractured jive vocals by an unidentified female. The party's never ended. Go on, Pierre. *Ron Nachmann*

E.O.C. CHROMATIX
Grab/US/12
Jeff Mitchell of Jazmin & Face and his man Keith Anderson collab as E.O.C. for this tight piece, which comes off more as uptempo, git-down funk than just another house tune. The remixes definitely refresh: James "Greens Keepers" Curd spins off of a bit of the original's Rhodes chords to form his choppy and intriguing Inhalation Remix, while Dallas boy Demarkus Lewis opens it out for a long take that integrates the tune's wah guitar, Rhodes and bluesy flutes. Smokin'. *Ron Nachmann*



Glasses, check. Record label shirt, check. Goatee, check. Blurry movement, check. Yep, that's techno: Adam Jay

TECHNO LABEL PROFILE: AZURE RECORDINGS
Indianapolis resident and horchata aficionado Adam Jay has been DJing since the age of 16, with a heavy background focusing on classical music theory. Originally entering the electronic dance music scene via '80s industrial electronic and underground dance promotion, Adam's productions quickly stirred up interest and he's steadily risen to status as one of America's top techno crafters. In 1999, Jay founded Azure Records in order to make music that, as he puts it, "maintains a groovy, heavy-handed drive of rhythm, but at the same time [keeps] a deep headspace that tricks listeners who would otherwise write off a rich, deep techno vibe." Azure garnered worldwide acknowledgment after its second release, "T4 Project," with mixes by super club jock Brian Zentz and Buffalo-based minimal techno shaman Mike Parker. Currently standing at six singles and Jay's *Self Exile* full-length, the Azure discography offers textures that range from deep, dubbed-out, atmospheric techno to harder, more club-aimed percussive workouts. Artists and remixers so far include Zentz, Parker, Locutus and V-Jek, who together offer a diverse set of tech flavors. Expect several promising releases in the next few months, including a remix EP of *Self Exile*'s featured single, "Regret" (which offers exclusive mixes by both Jay and Canadian audio mystic Mateo Murphy) and an LP introducing Noah Pred and Virulent. *PRAXIS*

BTRAX VS. VOID SOUTH COAST SLEAZE EP
Predicaments/UK/12
Founder Justin Berkovi and Geushky Records manager Ian Void bring to vinyl what they've been dishing out on dancefloors for many years. Here they assemble a variety of timbres, as a shuffled 909 groove receives the disco treatment, a haunting electro jam embellishes upon wild Waldorf waves, and a straight-ahead loopy drum track consumes an automated atmosphere. For a funk-laden techno thesis, you need look no further. *PRAXIS*

PASCAL FEOS
SELF-REFLEXION (THE MISSING TRACKS)
PV/GER/12
This EP is a supplement that completes Pascal's *Reflexion* album, released early this year. Focusing heavily on the methodology of FM synthesis, Pascal injects voices that are quite experimental and instills a heavy dawning of movement. From thick square-wave bass loops to varied synth textures, this release will appeal to those looking for innovative tech. *PRAXIS*

FREEZIE FREEKIE FLOW REMIXES
SatRx 001/US/12
SECRET FREQUENCY CREW MIAMI EYES
Mass Transit/US/12
Forward goes the East Coast electro community on the strength of these top remixes. To launch its remix-only SatRx 001 subsidiary, NYC label Satamile gives Freezie Freekie's crunchy dark-wave jam "Flow" to drum-machine gods Unn, Scape One, Bass Junkie and Transparent Sound, all of whom smudge the tune's make-up and drop it on the street for some good man/machine fun. Meanwhile, South Florida's Secret Frequency Crew gladly surrenders their seductively harsh and heavily vocodered civic theme "Miami Eyes" to British bass queen Andrea Parker for an epic and funky old-school work-out. Hot stuff. *Ron Nachmann*

HOLGISTAR STARWARS RMXS
Kiddaz.FM/GER/12
This EP keeps the vibe alive with even more mixes from this Berlin label's top producers. D. Diggler, DJ Sebrok, DJ Vibration and DJ Emerson work approaches that range from experimental hues to full-on club-driven techno. Emerson offers the

hardest hitting mix, as the original parts shine with his brilliant bassline polish. *PRAXIS*

MR. BARCODE
BINARY IS THE LANGUAGE OF LOVE EP
PR2/US/12
Following up releases by Western-tech types like Wyatt Earp and Adnan & Amit, Berkeley, CA's PR2 label offers well-crafted, Detroit-inspired techno from this mysterious producer. Thea-side's tweaked-out "Robot Love" gets a prize, as does the funky electro remix on the flipside, which also hosts the strangely melodic-yet-disconcerting tech-marcher "Disgusting Base." Smart techno is back, folks. *Ron Nachmann*

BEN SIMS THE STICK-UP
Ingoma/UK/12
This limited release has been enthralling audiences throughout Europe on CD promo, and now the anticipated wax is here. Thunderous reverb programs echo the epic organic feel, as groove-spliced vocal loops team up with a crowd-pleasing bassline. This release is a better DJ tool than previous titles, which simply shook the floor senseless. *PRAXIS*

TECHELECTRO VERSION 2.0
LoSonoFono/US/12
This companion to the recently released album by Techelectro (who are reputed to be a side-project of tech-pimps Solid Gold Playaz) offers diverse mixes of the album's elements by four underground dons. Tim Shumaker's Home & Garden mix brings smooth beats and soulful keys, while Davebot slides in some murky electro noise and DJ Slip centers his take on nifty tonal percussion. Stand back for the highlight: a sweet chunk of dense, dramatic and classically dubby techno generated by your man Landau. *Ron Nachmann*

MARK WILLIAMS CARNIVAL OF LOST SOULS EP
Primate/UK/12
As a new face to the Primate conglomerate, this esteemed twiddler has forged ahead with a slightly more aggressive sound. Entangled elements of basic Latin percussion solidify a prominent foundation, and drifty, delayed synth stabs entertain the mids. Well-synced modulations on the filters make for a healthy dancing episode. *PRAXIS*



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2-STEP GUEST REVIEWS:

MJ COLE

What becomes of an engineer with a music degree who spends the early '90s both clubbing wildly and polishing up drum & bass at London's SOUR label? Ask Matt "MJ Cole" Coleman. Inspired after working with Ramsey and Fen on garage mixes of Kym Myzelle, Cole immersed himself in the stuff and forged his own style. After numerous singles as Matlock on his own Prolific label, and remixes for the likes of Soul II Soul and Goldie, the man scored the fledgling AM:PM label a UK Top 40 hit in 1998 with "Sincere." That tune broke 2-step to the mainstream with soulful elegance, and made Cole a central figure. You know the rest: remixes for the top plays; the debut and sophomore albums, 00's *Sincere* and last year's *Cut to the Chase* for Talkin' Loud; and lotsa countries' stickers on that record case. Despite a schedule that includes several major-label production jobs and a relaunch of Prolific in the works, your man MJ found the time to recommend some matterin' platters. *Ron Nachmann*

AGENT X VINTAGE EP *white/UK/12*
A fantastic four-tracker from the makers of the infamous "Decoy." My fave track is "Hustler," an energetic blend of crisp 4x4 beats, vocal snips and savage bass. This vinyl has something for all garage heads! *MJC*

ASTROLAB COME MY WAY (SPIN-CYCLE RMX) *Automatic/UK/12*
Really liking this one. A much housier feel here: 909 snare rolls, filtered vocal echoes and punchy deep-house stabs all joined together with conga-led skip-py beats. Effective breakdown. Excellent! *MJC*

LIBERTY X JUMPIN' (DND RMX) *V2/UK/12*
Lively remix of what was originally an r&b tune, with 4x4 beats again. Uplifting feel here, with strings doing the work in the bass department. Simple, yet effective. Great blend between vocals and bassline. *MJC*

AGENT X CRUNCH *Heatseeker/UK/12*
Four-beat bizness on this one. Your man X offers up some nice high-register keyboard chords clinging onto a resolute bassline that at first seems pretty straightforward. But that bass soon changes pattern and bubbles your feet 'til you're rising inches above the floor. The flip, "Killahertz," does damage as well. Recommended. *Ron Nachmann*

BIG G SUNSHINE *Proper/UK/12*
Proper's head honcho gets on the knobs here and throws down an easy yet heavy bit of chugging reggae-tinged breaks, highlighted by some lovely vocal samples, pumping organ chords and a tenacious bassline. On the flip, production duo Tonk strips the damn thing down dub-wise and runs a more propulsive break and bassline. You win with either side of this bad bwoy. *Walker Lindh*

BILL VEGA & NEW DECADE *Running Scared RMX Skydive/UK/12*
York University production crew Big Square Sound remixes this one. Crunchy, distorted chords greet you at the intro, and after the nice-

ly trebled breakdown brings forward the thematic vocal sample, you're dropped into a big, wallowing booyaa of a bassline. Big Square Sound has rolled out a tune with numerous mini-breakdowns and change-ups on the fourth bars, both of which used to be breakbeat standards before things started getting monotonous. Bravo. *Ron Nachmann*

DATABASE VS CARE IN THE COMMUNITY *Gradient Freakaboom/UK/12*
South London's CIRC trio follows up their "Dub Ting" single by mixing it up with the one like Database. A squiggly bassline and a minimalist, delayed piano chord highlight this hot, funky and slower-than-normal jam. Many DJs will see this as a warm-up tune due to its tempo, which makes sense because it'll get folks on the floor in anticipation of the more extreme stuff. *Ron Nachmann*

DISTRACTION DIVERSION *Inflight Entertainment/UK/12*
Danny McMillan's label comes with a slab of pure, calmly jammin', dubby breakbeat shit like you kids used to make. Distraction piles a tightly minimal ragga chant vocal sample over occasional chords and drum fills and loads of stoned electronic effects, which get slathered

onto a dead-funky beat. The flip does it house style, but it doesn't compare to the a-side. Get this bastard. *Easy Snapping*

MR FIDGET FIDGESTRUMENTAL *Social Circles/UK/12*
Two-step meister Donae'o comes at ya once again, this time with that oo-fah buzzy bass business and a simple yet menacing piano-and-string riff played over a cut-up rhythm that sounds like dried beans being shaken in a coffee can. Social Circles can do no wrong at the moment. Boom. *Walker Lindh*

PRICE CUTS & YOSHI BASSTRAP *Lab Rok/AU/12*
An old-school synth-chord progression and two wonderful flute samples highlight this nifty bit of nu-funk from Sydney-based breaks producer David Price in collab with trance man Yoshi. This one includes both a sample from a children's record and a snare-fill build-up, neither of which, miraculously, comes off annoying. Jump on this, why don'tcha? *Ron Nachmann*

ROLL DEEP SALT BEEF *Roll Deep/UK/12*
Showing how out-there some of the East End post-garage repertoire can get, the Roll Deep

posse comes up with twisted, meandering violin and synth movements over a stop-and-go half-beat riddim. Carnage, Danny Weed and Bionics give it to us without the MCs this time, but that won't last long, believe. *Walker Lindh*

SCISSORKICKS WILD *2Wars & A Revolution/UK/12*
Breakbeat's hardest working bastard puts the smack down on the party on this one, peppering "Wild"'s charging bassline and funktacular beat with radioactive keyboard riffs and what sounds like vocal samples from between-song banter at a KISS concert! Nice! The flip's stealthy "Black Hole Tube" takes you underground in the same classic electro-grime spirit as Elite Force's "Bombing the Subway." All aboard! *Easy Snapping*

TRANSFORM MAN RAZORBLADES *MBN/UK/12*
T-Man unleashes another straight-ahead prime-time bass thrasher for MBN's seventh release, handing over a dense, synth-heavy piece for the headstrong. On the flip, Bristol man Kraymon calmly tones down the bass buzz and laces the whole thing with nuanced electro accents, making for an understated mix that outshines the original. *Ron Nachmann*



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Expert with the two-hand technique: DJ Patife

DRUM & BASS GUEST REVIEWS: DJ PATIFE

It's hard to underestimate the role of Brazilian DJs and producers in the revitalization of drum & bass. V Recordings' '01 double-disc compilation "Brazil EP" spread the word big-time, and introduced many to the talents of Sao Paolo's Wagner Borges Ribeiro de Souza, who you know as DJ Patife, whose remix of diva Fenanda Porto's "Sambassim" caused chaos on worldwide dancefloors. Coming up in SP's proletarian suburbs, Patfie started out playing hip-hop in the early '90s, and hit the hardcore/jungle path with fellow Paolan DJ Marky in 1994. By the time he and Marky hit Europe in '97 to meet the originators, the samba seed was planted in the ailing genre. With two mix albums under his belt to date-1999's *Sounds of Drum 'n' Bass* and 2002's *Cool Steps: Drum 'n' Bass Grooves*-along with remixes for the likes of Koop and Cleveland Watkiss, Patife's moving nowhere but forward. He's got a new mix CD and a couple of new 12s on tap for Movement, along with singles for V Recordings and his debut artist album, which will reportedly feature guests from Brazil, UK and Chile. Check your local listings for Patife's current fall tour throughout the US, Europe, Australia, New Zealand and Japan, where he might play a couple of the jams below. *Ron Nachmann*

PESHAY NU JACK SWING *Pivotal*/UK/12

I love the mixture between jazz and d&b. The promo version I have never came out and it's a bit old, but I keep playing it all the time. *DJP*

JAHEIM PUT THAT WOMAN FIRST (CALIBRE RMX) *white*/UK/12

Beautiful tune!! Perfect for the ladies: nice piano, lovely breaks...it's all I need. *DJP*

PHUTURISTIX FEAT JENNA G BEAUTIFUL *Hospital*/UK/12

I'm in love with this! These guys make kind of down breaks and stuff like that. The original is already amazing, and NuTone do a great job on the d&b remix. Big up to the Hospital Records crew. *DJP*

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE HOOKED ON *V*/UK/12

Your man Glen turns it on here, with a great use of soul samples and a nicely simple and hypnotic chord progression for some brightly tuned business. And then you tune in to the chaotic synth notes in the far back and you realize how thick this mother is. "100%" on the flip is not fucking around either, but the a-side wins again. *Ron Nachmann*

BROCKIE & ED SOLO SLEEPING GIANT *Undiluted*/UK/12

Brocks and Eds have rolled another one for ya. Lovely spy-soundtrack piano and vibraphone samples in the intro of "Sleeping Giant," reggae-ish mid-tone bassline over the sub-bass, and tight dubby effects make this an elegant, propulsive piece. On the flip, "Piano Tune" comes across with a simpler sophistication, but doesn't quite measure up to the Giant. Overall, this one works. *Ron Nachmann*

KALEB HORNS BLUE SONIX LET THE MUSIC TAKE YOUR MIND *Phuturistic Bluez*/US/12

New York's Phuturistic Bluez brings that soulful drum & bass ish. Finnish boy Kaleb's new single lives up to its title track, with brassy stabs augmenting bouncy bongos, buzzed-out bass and well-used female soul vocal samples. Kaleb brings it early-morning mellow on the flip's "Drifter," with Phillip Glass-y piano and sweet sax licks. As Blue Sonix, Rikki Blue very effectively sluices Spanish guitar through his title track, while the flipside's "Look" swings some disco-ey stabs as MC Mark Holmes goes on singing. *Walker Lindh*



Unlike the beats, the man's in shape: DJ Jab

HIP-HOP GUEST REVIEWS: DJ JAB/FAT BEATS

You remember the summer of 1994: Nas and Biggie were rookies, Common still had his Sense, and we were just tryin' to be cool like dat. And the independent hip-hop game changed when DJ Jab (a.k.a. Joseph Abajian) opened his small vinyl-only retail store Fat Beats in an East Village location in the summer. Plenty has happened in the course of nine years: Abajian has opened shops in LA and Amsterdam; he's made Fat Beats Distribution the premier global independent hip-hop distribution company specializing in vinyl; the Fat Beats label has released music by folks like Atmosphere, J-Zone, Triple Threat, Sadat X, Blackalicious and Roc Raida; and www.fatbeats.com has online hip-hop sales on lock (check the site-if you can't find what you're looking for there, you don't need it). Between overseeing all of that, working on a Freddie Fox/Nas split 12" (with a DJ Premier-produced b-side, holla!), and making things happen with up-and-coming all-female Queens indie band the Elektrik Shoes, Joe barely had enough time to let us know what's bangin'. *Ron Nachmann*

BLAQ POET A MESSAGE FROM POET *Year Round*/US/12

This newest MC on DJ Premier's Year Round Records roster delivers a powerful verse (stemming from the Chuck D tree) about all the MCs that's beefing today, over another Premier classic. A rare positive track that's much needed! *JAB*

JAYLIB CHAMPION SOUND *Stones Throw*/US/12

This Madlib-produced track combines hardcore hip-hop with a slight old school feel, reggae and opera. Jaydee delivers a melodic verse about a ride that someone in the crew owns and what he might do if he gets lucky with it. *JAB*

SA SMASH ILLY *Def Jux*/US/12

Straight out of Columbus, OH, Def Jux's newest duo Camutao and Metro will change the conventional attitude about Def Jux. SA Smash are the kids who you might have got jacked by and then they were in the spotlight and you couldn't do anything about it. *JAB*

BIZ MARKIE FEAT. ELEPHANT MAN LET ME SEE YOU BOUNCE *Tommy Boy*/US/12

It's hard for the Biz to surprise anyone these days-after all, he's built a career on making the unexpected work-but no one expected him to record with Elephant Man. Biz runs into a stamina problem on this one. He comes correct on his first verse, but his laid-back third verse pales in comparison to the hypeness of verse two, courtesy of the Energy God, who naturally seems much more at home over the dancehall riddim than does his Yankee host. *Ross Hogg*

KICE OF COURSE COMPETITION *Smacks*/UK/12

Over a sparse beat that never seems to kick in (produced by label owner Mr. Len), Kice lets the "Competition" know how hard he is. Very, apparently. On the flip, "Who You Talkin' 'Bout?" is another hypnotic skeleton of a beat with more of the same lyrically. If you're into raw, grimy, underground hip-hop that will never see the light of a disco ball, bang this on your stoop. If you're a wanksta, keep walkin'. *Ross Hogg*

MOS DEF BEEF *Rawkus*/UK/12

In two minutes fifteen seconds, Mos squashes all hip-hop beef. How? By breaking down what *real* beef is. Over a hypnotic head-nodder of a beat, he lists "Mrs. Wallace still don't know who shot Biggie" and "the cocaine and AIDS epidemics" as a few examples of what's really real. On the flip, he's joined by new-jack Cassidy on the dark Swizz Beats-produced "Monster Music," a loving ode to the complexity of living in the ghetto. *Ross Hogg*

OUTKAST THE WAY YOU MOVE *Arista*/US/12

Outkast's new double album, *Speakerboxx*, finds Big Boi and Andre 3000 on different sides of the gatefold; each member has his own disc and this single is split accordingly. "The Way You Move" is the softer side of electro, with Big Boi's

double-time rhymes over a stripped-down 808 beat and an r&b hook by Sleepy Brown. Andre's "Hey Ya!" is more Rembrandt than Run DMC (and even has a Toni Basil-esque breakdown). But like everything freaky Outkast has ever tried, it works beautifully. *Ross Hogg*

PLANET ASIA SUMMERTIME IN THE CITY *Avatar*/US/12

Fresno's freshest is back with a song for the season. Over semi-psychedelic '60s samples, Planet A spits his battle-ready lyrics in the sure and steady style that's made him "the 209's finest rhymers." But if you're looking for something to ride to, bump the flipside's "Gs & Soldiers." Dogg Pound gangsta Kurupt puts the "G" back in "guest," joining forces with Asia with heated results. *Ross Hogg*

SHARPSHOOTERS LOVE WALKED PAST REMIXED/TALKIN' DIRTY *Light in the Attic*/UK/12

MC 'Lut' joins Sharpshooters on the remixed version of "Love Walked Past," adding his description of the aforementioned passing paramour over a haunting vocal sample and a slow, solemn beat. The original (an instrumental) is here, too, as well as a "Lovely" remix, again with 'Lut'. If all that love has you down, check out the flip for the uptempo "Talkin' Dirty," a happy flute-filled, saxed-out funk affair. *Ross Hogg*

THEDJSTRONG PRESENTS ABSTRACT RUDE W/KOOL DJ EQ/KOSMIC FOUR GOT IT LIKE THAT/LIFE IZ SICK *Stronghouse*/US/12

It's hard to disagree with this song's hook: "Abstract got it like that." Few underground MCs have more clout or years in the game than Abstract Rude. He touches on independence, battle scars, and the ubiquitous sucker MCs over a hot beat from Kool DJ EQ, who also provides some blazing cuts. The flip finds Kosmic Four musing on the ills of the world over a Hitchcockesque rhythm. *Ross Hogg*



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“You first, mate”: Bent

FUTURE JAZZ GUEST REVIEWS: BENT

Leave it to a couple of housemates from pastoral Nottingham, UK to earn their fortunes by making downtempo fun again. If you believe their version of the story, it's been five years since the weekend when sound librarian Simon Mills and burnt-out house producer Neil "Nail" Tolliday tossed on some cheesy records, broke out their samplers, cracked open some brews and formed Bent. There's obviously some magic in their fucking around, because the duo's two albums of irreverent, easygoing and crafty jazz- and rock-tinged beats–2000's *Programmed to Love* and the newly released *The Everlasting Blink* on Guidance–have garnered them giant props. Add in their recent uptempo contributions as DJs to the vaunted *Fabric Live* mix series, and you can't deny that these two won't be smelling each others' socks for much longer. Whatcha got to say for yourselves, boys? *Ron Nachmann*

THE FOUR FLAVORS EP *Bastard Jazz*/US/12

Really nice EP. Sounds like it could have been on Mo' Wax a few years ago. Especially like the main mix of Cordovan's "Magma," which has a kind of a Carl Craig-when-he-

does-slower-stuff vibe to it. Good breakbeat with atmospherics sprinkled over the top. The bassline sounds quite random at first, but it pulls the whole thing together. The remixes of the two original tracks are quality too, with the remix of "Magma" bringing enough weirdness to the party to go round. *Bent*

KABUKI FEAT. CLEVELAND WATKISS AFTER THE FIRE *Compost*/GER/12

Love the kind of swinging, almost 6/8 beat to this track. The production on the original is easygoing and fairly sparse, which gives it a very mellow atmosphere. The vocals have a dustiness to them that I like, but "*After the fire comes the rain*" is slightly cheesy as a lyric. The remix is a dubbier, more atmospheric affair that drifts along a bit. On the whole, it's a very chilled and listenable tune. *Bent*

TOM CHASTEEN MOVIN' *Exist Dance*/US/12

This track starts well with some nice drums and a crunchy bassline, but then kind of goes on without really reaching the potential it obviously has. It's a little formulaic at times and is pretty much the same all the way through: spacey, with a repetitive vocal. It's not terrible, but then it's not great either. However, there's a really nice trippy vibe to the track and it would sound good loud–I suppose that's the point! *Bent*

**DIMLITE A/DD
GEORG LEVIN YOU KNOW WHAT YOU WANT BUT YOU WON'T GET IT**

Sonar Kollektiv/GER/12
Berlin's Sonar Kollektiv label keeps diversifying. Swiss post-hop DJ Dimlite slaps stylistic high-fives with avant-beat slicers like Prefuse 73 and DJ DSL while maintaining a uniquely soulful and smooth keyboard-centered vibe. Speaking of soulful, there goes your new silky blue-eyed soul man, Berlin producer/singer Georg Levin, taunting you with that quiet-storm vocal grain on the downtempo "You Know..." and getting sassy on DJ Spinna's '80s uptempo soul remix of "In Your Car." With this guy around, Jamiroquai needs to jump in his car and get outta town. *Ron Nachmann*

INCOGNITO ON THE ROAD (DANNY KRIVIT RE-EDIT)

Ibadan/US/12
Body and Soul resident Krivit follows up his treatment of Aretha Franklin in his re-edit series with this smooth yet jumpy New York-style bossa treatment of this classic from the prime players in

acid jazz's first wave. The Brazilian environment works wonderfully, especially in the vocal/keyboard trade-offs and percussion breakdowns in the middle. *Ron Nachmann*

NECTAR THE OTHER

Grayhound/US/12
San Francisco DJ Garth's erstwhile deep house label goes a bit outside, in top Frisco style. On the flipside of producer Adam Tenenbaum's chunk of dubby soul-techno lies a cut of opaque yet chugging '80s house groove ("Say Something") and some haunted, percussive broke-beat action ("What's Happening?"). Tight. *Robert "Boogie" Sheftell*

ROCHE WHAT'S LEFT?

Solos/US/12
Ben Winans launches this SF-based label with eight tracks of various lengths and approaches to downtempo. Between the distorted electronics of "Intro Fo Show," the ghostly orchestrations and babbling vocal samples of "Back Again Da Monk

Stylee" and the manipulated tripmospheres over the breaks of "Breaks Down," you're gonna find what you need as far as bong-hit soundtracks and DJ tools. *Robert "Boogie" Sheftell*

SIDEWINDER LESS THAN EFFORTLESS RMX

Fenetik Music/UK/12
Germany's Soul Patrol duo rocks a hypnotizing Afro-funk mix of Sidewinder's mellow "Less Than Effortless," sprouting it from the original's warm trumpet riff into a crisp keyboard-centered jam. On the flip, Tom Churchill sprinkles some two-steppy spice on the Winder's summery "Open Source," placing the keyboard and flute parts just lovely. Swinging. *Walker Lindh*

SIMILOU SUPERNOVA SKY

HIRD I LOVE YOU MY FRIENDS
DNM/SWE/12
Swedish imprint DNM offers up two specimens of groove from funky Gothenburg (or Gonkyburg...get it?). The duo Similou draws equally from influences like Soul II Soul and

Jazzanova to buoy top vocalist Yukimi Nagano on two hot bits of laidback, make-out jazz-funk. Twenty-one-year old Hird follows up his burning "Keep You Hird" single from earlier this year with a four-track EP that ranges from Rhodes-filled samba funk to minimalist jazzy downtempo to stripped-down blues ballad. Great variety on both of these. *Ron Nachmann*

TWEAK GENERATIONS

TOTAL SCIENCE SUNRISE
Head to Toe/ITA/12
Italy's Head to Toe imprint keeps coming correct with these two slabs. As Tweak, Switzerland's Cyril Boehler laces a typical broken beat with some fine soul melody for the smooth and funky stylings of American singer Sharon Harris; Stockholm's Cyclo remixes the track into more deep techno territory. Meanwhile, UK duo Total Science brings a building housey shuffle on "Sunrise" before rolling deep, broken rumba vibes on "Bookworm." Bravo. *Ron Nachmann*

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"Does this afghan really say 'Brooklyn', dear?": Brooklyn Beats' Doily and Criterion

own releases and benefit comps like *Brutal Police Menace*, the duo put out the Brooklyn Beats 7" series in 2001, which featured 45 RPM gems by Afro-hyper-speedster DJ/rupture, ambient twister I-Sound and French digi-punks Rotator. This fall's Brooklyn output will include noisescapey 12" singles like Doily's "Mattress of the Universe" and Criterion's "Wet Pain," alongside the demi-dub beat damage of 1-Speed Bike's "El Gallito" EP. Now check what these true rebels are dealing with. *Ron Nachmann*

BIG JUSTOLEUM NEPHLIM MODULATION SYSTEMS *Big Dada/UK/12*
"Woe to Thee O Land Whose King is a Child" is the subtitle to this, and it sums up this double-vinyl anti-Bush statement. Seething diatribes, plenty of DJ-friendly Bush snippets and dirty-ass, thick beats that'll put Def Jux to shame. *C&D*

BLACK DICE CONE TOASTER *DFA/US/12*
We're happy Black Dice stay so stoned because it keeps them in their noisy little make-believe forest longer. Please remix Janet Jackson! *C&D*

ELEKTROMEKA RIDDIM EP *Casse-tete/FRA/12*
Elektromeka brings us the best of the pure French sound on his second release: distorted b-boy breaks with skittery fills and plenty of strange melodies and shrill noise. *C&D*

ELECTRIC KETTLE FASTER CEREMONY AND ULTRA-DISCIPLINE *Hurry Up/FRA/12*
In the Elektromeka vein with harsh French mayhem, exploring uncharted terrain unheard by breakcore ears. Some jungle tendencies, but thankfully working clear of today's popular ragga breaks trend. *C&D*

BANGKOK IMPACT FEAT KASSEN
COLOUR OVER TASTE
ENDORPHINS TAMING TEXTURES
Vynalogica-CEM/NETH/12
The third and fourth in this 12" series—in which Amsterdam's Center for Electronic Music invites today's innovators into their 45-year-old studio full of vintage equipment—offer up some charming, varied treats. As Bangkok Impact, Finnish discolectro upstart Sami Liuksi bounces between cheerful analog boogie and opaque old-school tech and ambient. And Dutch guy Endorphins's snappy, understated beats and mysterious atmospheres evoke early Cabaret Voltaire—one can do much worse. Check these and the other two at vynalogica.com *Ron Nachmann*

CHROMEO DESTINATION: OVERDRIVE
Turbo/CAN/12
Based on their pedigree as two of Montreal's top-ranking hip-hop producers, Dave 1 and P-Thugg have risked little scorn coming out as '80s pop-rock-tinged electro dorks. This pouty follow-up to last year's Playgroup-pleasing "You're So Gangsta" is some Hall & Oatesy dark-pop that gets roughed up band-style by Brooklyn boys DFA. If you like your blue-eyed retro-electro soul with a bloody nose, snap this up. *Walker Lindh*

MATTHEW DEAR DOG DAYS
Spectral Sound/US/12
This first single from Matthew Dear's forthcoming Spectral album *Leave Luck to Heaven* is smart, minimal and as poppy as an Afghan opium field. Pantytec resculpts it as a bulbous balloon of low-end kick. It must be said, then: dog days are here again. And thanks for that. *Alexis Georgopoulos*

DILO! PEREZ PROJECTS
white/US/12
A brilliant little oddity from SF visual artist Eamon Ore-Giron accompanied by Nortec associate Julio Cesar Morales. Dilo takes to Perez Prado the way Aphex Twin takes to insanity. Acknowledging Miami bass, dancehall, smart

LEFTFIELD GUEST REVIEWS: CRITERION AND DOILY/BROKLYN BEATS
Philly? Boston? DC? Ha! It was Brooklyn, baby, where they fought the first battle in the American Revolutionary War in August 1776. And judging from the work of Heather Leitner and Criterion Thornton, who run the borough's experimentalist Brooklyn (sic) Beats label, the revolution's never let up. Leitner (who records and DJs as Doily) and Thornton founded Brooklyn Beats in 1998 to release outside, punk-spirited electronic music with a non-preaching conscience, and they have since garnered global accolades for their ultra-indie efforts. Alongside their

LUCKY 13

REVIEWS BY TOPH ONE

Was it that trip to jail last weekend or am I really just becoming the surly old fucker we always suspected that I would evolve into? The music just doesn't sound as good, the clubs are getting tired, and half the time I gotta coax my weary old bones out the door and onto the bus. I'm sick to death of the rising cost of peanut butter, a life of never-ending facial hair, and morons requesting radio hip-hop. Get the fuck out the club, step into your gas-guzzling Ford Behemoth, and turn on KMEL, jackass! And pick me up a jar of Jif Extra Creamy while you're out there.

Maybe it's the nearly 20 years of almost constant ACTION catching up to bite me on the ass, but when I dream now, it's visions of raising goats on some oak-shaded little hunk of dirt up in Sonoma County, happy as a donkey to grow old and wrinkly.

Perhaps I just want to rent E.M. Forrester movies and sip tea on the couch a few nights a week, is that so wrong? (Mutter the word "maturing" and I'll rip your tongue out with a rusty can opener.) Christ almighty, there must be some balance somewhere in this damned life, but hell if I know where to find it. I need a few months off, or several years. Someone get me a one-way ticket to Dubrovnik, where I'll gladly unload the local fishing boats for a rooftop shanty and a little slivovitz after work.

Anyway, here are 13 little gems that push the norm just a bit, and make my life a wee bit more interesting...

- 1) **[UNKNOWN] "UNTITLED]"** (*white/US/7*) My man Frosty passed me this little mystery on one of those glisteningly bright, beer and pot-heavy Los Angeles afternoons at the dublab.com studios. Is it another weird Adventure Time voyage? Maybe DJ Nobody remixing My Bloody Valentine? Don't worry about it—enjoy it. Slow, head-nodding goodness from whoever's brain.
 - 2) **CHEAP COLOGNE "JUST A LITTLE SAMPLE"** (*Bomb/US/CD*) Dave Paul always comes with the good shit, like his latest installment of the seminal *Return of the DJ, Volume 5*, but this here Cheap Cologne is something else entirely. Part indie rock/hip-hop with turntablism and jazz licks and MCs, they've just gotta be from someplace bizarre like Minnesota or Chicago. Tracks to check are "Sobercab," the lovely "Wheezing" and the almost indescribable "Poke @ The Art."
 - 3) **"REWORKED VOL. 1 AND 2"** (*bootleg/US/EP*) These two kick-ass bootlegs showed up in the record bag by unknown means after another six-gig, three-night weekend. One features a beautiful take on Terry Callier's "Darker Than A Shadow" by a Mr. French, and could open or close any set of mine, anywhere, anytime. Then Mums the Word does his thang with De La's "Itsowezee" and let me tell you, that's a thing of beauty.
 - 4) **JON KENNEDY "THE LOAFER"** (*Grand Central/UK/10*) Sweet stuff from the always on-point Grand Central camp. Something for the 7PM cocktail lounge (the title track), midnight sexiness ("Way I Feel") and 3AM dancefloor ("The Make to Shake You"). Time to look into Mr. Kennedy's ever-growing discography if jazzy downtempo is your thang.
 - 5) **DISSENT "BLEEDING TOGETHER (REMIXES)"** (*Wide Hive/US/12*) Flip on side 2 for Giant Step DJ Eli's slow-burning Afrobeat mix full of percussion jabs, warm keys and horn stabs. And be on the lookout for the full-length album of Wide Hive remixes out now.
 - 6) **EARFLAPS VS. CHAMKILE & AMARJOT "LEY JA KITTE DOOR"** (*self/US/12*) Mad Middle-Eastern electro-bass as only Oakland or Brooklyn would dare. Fat as all hell, track it down now!
 - 7) **THE SOUL KEEPER "BREAKS AHEAD 2003"** (*Mission Cartel/US/LP*) Bugged out breaks, beats, loops and snippets from the Bulletproof Space Traveler zone of interdimensional weirdness. Grab two copies of this sick puppy and you, too, can be the next DJ AlesOne!
 - 8) **WORDSWORTH "THANKS FOR COMING OUT"** (*7 Heads/US/12*) Man, there really has been some lovely new hip-hop coming out this last year...now Wordsworth jumps into the ring with this beautiful little offering from 7 Heads, along with Audessey of Mass Influence on the flip with the spaghetti Western-tinged "The Gusto." Sounds like something from the Likwit crew!
 - 9) **PARSONA "THEY HOLD SECRETS"** (*Far From Normal/US/EP*) Four tracks from the mind of Miami/SF super DJ, digger, and producer Coop D'Ville. Let me tell ya: this cat puts it down, whether rocking the party or laying ill beats, and this sampler is just the tip of the iceberg. From the darkly futuristic "My City" to the classic Primo feel of "No Sleep" to the gritty sounds of Little Havana on "Poverty Oscar-Lunar," Coop shines bright, with partner AI on the vocab. More, brother!
 - 10) **DIVERSE "EXPLOSIVE (FEAT RJD2 AND LYRICS BORN)"** (*Chocolate Ind/US/12*) Shit is like a high speed car wreck of cop show themes and funk rock, with lyrics and choruses scattered all over the intersection.
 - 11) **INSIGHT "READY & ABLE"** (*Brick/US/EP*) A one-man hip-hop machine, Boston's Insight crafts his own tracks and spits fire over them as well. The results are downright staggering. Check the amazing "Time Frame" or the UK-produced "Speech Puzzle," too.
 - 12) **OMID "MONOLITH"** (*Mush/US/CD*) See, I used to hate CDs, but now that I appreciate sitting in my 1940s easy chair waiting for my soup to heat up, I can dig the pleasure of putting something like Omid's new CD on and just digging it all the way through. Sick, progressive hip-hop with guests Abstract Rude, Buck 65, and cats from Living Legends & Freestyle Fellowship. Sink into it...
- LUCKY 13) DJ TV VOLUME 1** (*Hip Hop Slam/US/video*) Of course I'm behind anything Billy Jam does, but this DJ TV is some ill shit, indeed. All the usual favorites: Apollo & Q-Bert & the Skratz Piklz crew, DJ Disk and his Ugly Grandpa, DJ Flare, UB, plus Guru, Just-Ice, Tino Corp and The Coup! Homemade D.I.Y. hip-hop at its gritty best.



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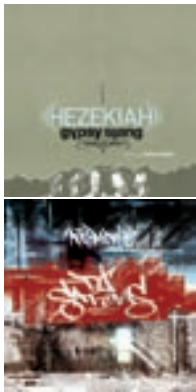
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VIS-ED HVW8 ART INSTALLATION

NURTURING AN UNORTHODOX VISUAL AESTHETIC THAT BLENDS ELEMENTS OF GRAFFITI, GRAPHIC DESIGN AND FORMAL PAINTING, THE HVW8 ART INSTALLATION USES THEIR COLLECTIVE SKILLS TO BREATHE LIFE INTO BLANK CANVAS.

TEXT **MATTHEW NEWTON** IMAGES **HVW8**

Globetrotting artists extraordinaire Tyler Gibney, Gene Pendon and Dan Buller have been paying their dues on the art gallery and music festival circuit for some time. Working together as the HVW8 (pronounced “heavy-weight”) Art Installation, they’ve paid tribute to their influences via colorful montage portraits of music icons, renowned intellectuals and political pundits. A contemplative Walter Gropius, drenched in vivid blues and reds, meditates amongst a backdrop of his own architectural creations. In contrast, Noam Chomsky’s slender face, rendered in pale blue and with photographic accuracy, is set against a beautifully detailed geometric design. Flexing an uncommon ability to merge three individual artists’ styles into one piece, HVW8 creates works of stunning scope and visual stimulation.

Figuring that three brains are better than one, the Canadian natives joined forces in the late ’90s and started work in a studio that Tyler acquired under somewhat peculiar circumstances. “I had a studio space in Montreal that I inherited from my landlord because the

Haitian drug dealers living there were three months delinquent on their rent and seemed to have skipped town,” Gibney explains. “He offered me the studio as long as I had something going on before they returned.”

Enter Pendon and Buller, friends and collaborative artists who met in Ottawa and had been creating murals, graffiti and painting live at parties for over six years. “I had seen Dan and Gene’s work and was blown away with their skills,” Gibney says. “I asked them to meet me at the Belle Vie, a diner restaurant half a block from the studio, and I proposed that we start a collective. We went and stole office furniture and moved in the space.”

From that point forward, the HVW8 empire grew, one party at a time. The trio began coordinating events that would serve as a creative outlet for art and music and to help cover rent. Notes Gibney: “The parties would be a hybrid of art openings and afterhours [clubs] that would go on to eight in the morning with the whole spectrum of music and people—house, dub,

hip-hop, funk—with breakdance circles and toasters rhyming over breaks. It was great. We worked on art but wanted to be involved with the live setting—that’s where the art installation grew from.”

Fascinated with the concept of integrating their work into a live environment, HVW8 evolved into a mobile art project that documented the lives of “heavy-weight” icons with their signature expressive brush strokes. “We did our first live painting at the Montreal Jazz Festival,” Pendon says. “As we created more paintings the push became to create a series of live works that were influenced by whatever we experienced as three artists in clubs and shows, and by the music that played and the places we traveled.”

Attracting large and diverse crowds to their live shows, the Heavyweight Art Installation plans to further extend its reach. With a book project, gallery shows and new studio and live works in production, the HVW8 clique has quite a few rounds left in its creative arsenal.



OSUNLADE



ANGELA DAVIS



UROY



DONNY HATHAWAY

“ I ASKED THEM TO MEET ME AT THE BELLE VIE, A DINER RESTAURANT HALF A BLOCK FROM THE STUDIO, AND I PROPOSED THAT WE START A COLLECTIVE. WE WENT AND STOLE OFFICE FURNITURE AND MOVED IN THE SPACE. ”

HEAVYWEIGHT INTEL:

XLR8R: *If pushed too far in a bare-knuckle brawl, would any member of the HVW8 clique ever resort to biting off his competitor's ear in order to win?*
Tyler Gibney: Well, we can all be bull-headed, so we'd probably all end up with a missing ear. Gene will eat anything.

Gene Pendon: Maybe me. I'll eat anything.

Dan Buller: Forgetting for a moment that we're all total wimps, maybe Gene, I guess. It would be my ear, probably. Ty would be passed out after the first elbow, while Gene manged *my* oreille. Gene will eat anything.

XLR8R: *With group chemistry obviously playing an important role in HVW8's success, what bad habits, if any, plague the group and how are they normally dealt with?*
TG: Lots of times it's the "I thought you were going to take care of that" argument. It's dealt with when it comes up.

GP: We all have our moments of being hardheaded but we've always worked things through.

DB: We all smoke too many cigarettes.

XLR8R: *In a three-man drinking contest, which crew member would reign supreme?*

TG: Coming from a land where six months of the year it's limb-numbing cold, we all can pound it pretty hard.

GP: I'm not sure. Maybe Dan, Tyler, then me. But you'd think I won because I'd be passed out with my eyes still open.

DB: We've never actually done that, but I think I could probably hold my own against either of those light-weights.

XLR8R: *Which HVW8 artist is known for telling tall tales? Give an example.*
TG: I would have to say me, but they honestly just sound like tall tales. I try to document everything because Canadians are skeptical.

GP: Tyler, sort of. You might think he's bullshitting, but then somehow, he always has the pictures to prove it.

XLR8R: *In a high-speed car chase, which HVW8 artist would be best in the driver's seat and why?*
TG: Dan doesn't really drive, but Gene can hold it down. I think it would be a close one between Gene and myself. I've really logged the mileage living in LA.
GP: Well, it's certainly a toss up between Tyler and I,

'cause Dan's license is expired. Unless it's a standard, because I suck at driving standard.

DB: Definitely Gene. He's done the most driving on the mean streets of Montreal. Nerves of frigging steel.

XLR8R: *During your world travels, who's normally the troublemaker in the clique?*
TG: Me.

GP: Tyler—and he has the pictures to prove it.

DB: It varies. We're all such nice, polite Canadian boys, we get in more trouble from people expecting us to be bad. There was that one time in San Francisco though... we've all done our fair share of damage, I'd say.

XLR8R: *Have you ever trashed a hotel room, rock 'n' roll style?*
TG: No, we're respectful Canadian boys...plus most times it's our credit card on the room.

GP: We're not *that* kind of live painting collective.

DB: Not trashed, but we have left a few paint stains along the way.
www.hvw8.com



However, what American officials never explained was how these technolo-

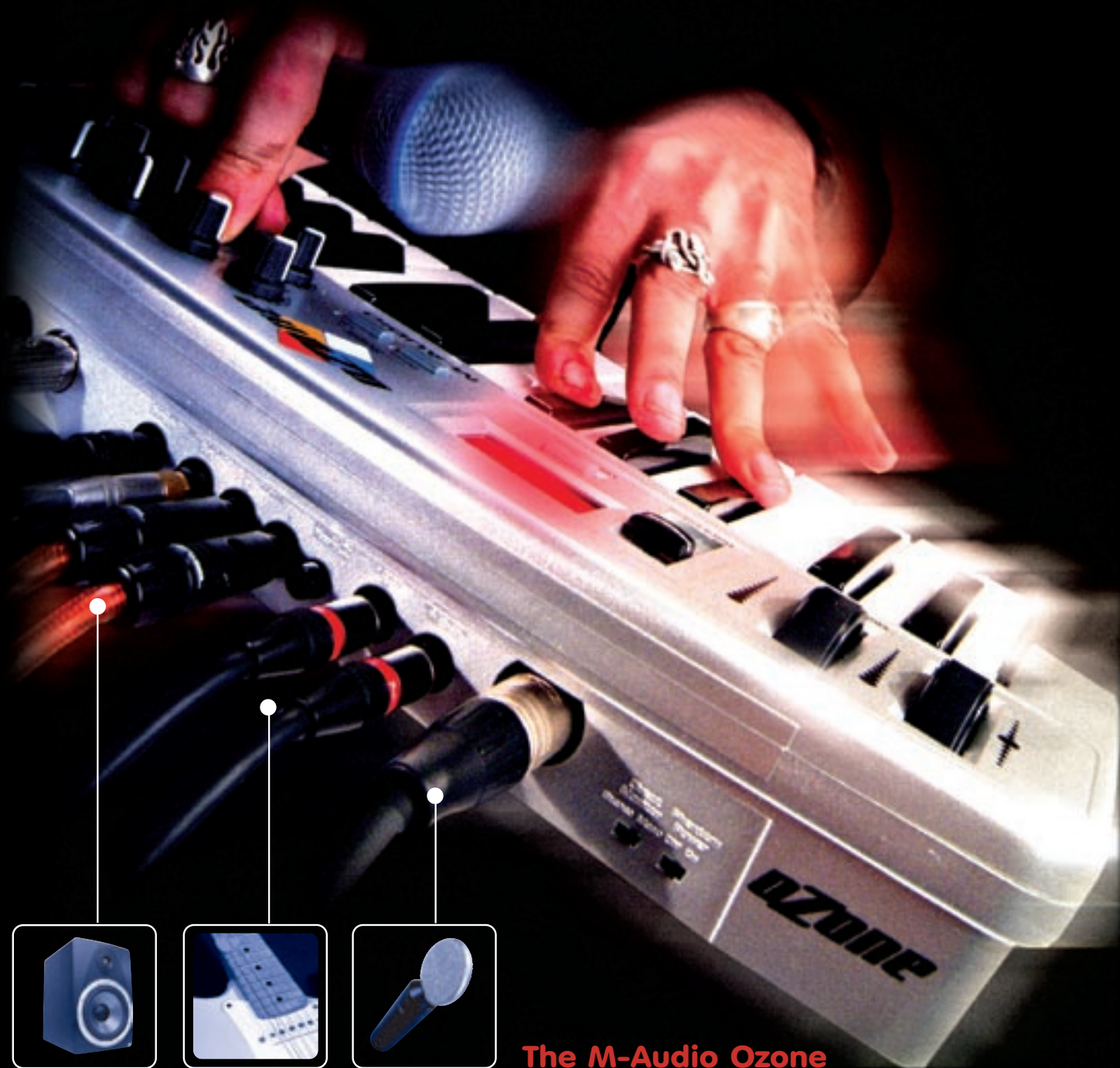
Joel Schallit is the author of *Jerusalem Calling* and the editor of *The Anti-Capitalism Reader*, both of which were published in 2002 by Brooklyn's Akashic Books. He is currently preparing his third book, *Israel Versus Utopia*, for Akashic, and entering his seventh year editing *Punk Planet* magazine.



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FEATURING:

**PROPELLERHEAD'S
SOFTWARE GURU**
TALKING WITH A REASONABLE GENT

ROB WARDEN OF NUMARK
MAKING THE TURNTABLE DIGITAL

MONOLAKE
ABLETON LIVE'S TECHNO TALENT

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

**IN THE STUDIO WITH SIDESTEPPEER, DIGITAL SCRATCHING,
NATIVE INSTRUMENTS REAKTOR 4 PLUS 8 PAGES OF SOFTWARE
AND HARDWARE REVIEWS**

BEND
IT

LIKE CHACHI

Welcome to *XLR8R's* second annual music technology special, a spiffy exhibition of electrifying auditory tools and scintillating software alchemy!

Jeez—do I sound like a wanker, or what?

But seriously, we're excited about these machines and applications as the curve arches in the direction of empowering more people to make music. Our staff represents pretty much the average electronic and dance music enthusiast—we've got a taste for the gear, but we don't all have PhDs in Computer Science or Studio Arts. We all wanna make bangin' tunes for our DJ sets and DiY labels, but aren't millionaires or lotto winners (yet). Hence, we make due with what we've got, and I wager a lot of exciting music is being made in the process despite our deficits.

There's a certain pride in rocking the party with a track made on nothing more than a Groovebox or laptop running Reason or Acid—just ask Tigerbeat 6 artists Dynasty or Cex. Seriously, we can't all afford Pro Tools and don't have the massive brain capacity to understand MAX-MSP, but we *can* all enjoy the craft of making music. Think of yourselves as a digital equivalent to the radical knitting circles that have sprung up in bedrooms and cafés around the world, or akin to the subway musicians that wow us with nothing more than some pots and pans and an original idea.

My good friend Shockman recent flipped my lid with a nearly sequenced hybrid-genre 150bpm sub-low/2-step (pardon the scenery jargon) track made on nothing more than his Roland 303 Dr. Sample. The beats were as raw as sand paper and herky-jerky in a funky, JayDee or Neptunes kind-of-way. It was dope, and damn near ready to play out. *That's what I'm talking about.*

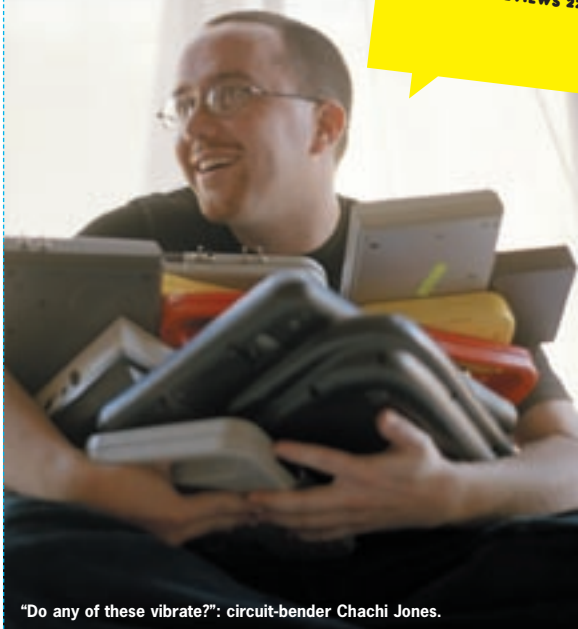
So, go forth and *do it*, my peoples. And for some inspiration, check these machines out. Sure, some of 'em are a touch more pricey than you or I can afford at present, but it's always good to dream big and know what's out there. The future is ours to design.

—Tomas Palermo, Editor

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SPECIAL MUSIC TECHNOLOGY ISSUE

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"Do any of these vibrate?": circuit-bender Chachi Jones.

Image: Jessica Miller

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>> IF THE AUDIO DEVICE IS BATTERY-POWERED (USING ANY WALL PLUG-INS WILL HAVE 'EM GIGGLING AT YOUR FUNERAL), IT'S FAIR GAME FOR C-BENDING.

ACCIDENTALLY FAMOUS

Chachi Jones

THE REVOLT AGAINST FACTORY-PRESET SOUNDS IS GETTING NASTIER. BEHOLD THE ART OF **CIRCUIT-BENDING**.

WORDS CAMERON MACDONALD
IMAGES JESSICA MILLER

Ever try to get a toddler to perform electronic music? You probably just pushed a Fisher Price keyboard into the li'l angel's drool-covered hands and watched. It's unlikely that the runt impulsively hit the "demo" button and then jumped around in a trance before sudden dehydration. Instead, he or she probably threw the toy against a wall because that xylophone patch just didn't cut it. But how that kid laughed when the machine garbled out pure dementia.

As long as preset sounds in digital doo-dads have existed, there have always been curious folks trying to disrupt them. Consider circuit-bending.



To circuit-bend—or c-bend—is to perform brain surgery. It's about breaking open a battery-powered audio device—like a Simon puzzle or a Tickle-Me Elmo—manipulating parts of its circuit board with common electronics-kit tools to "bend" the data, then making it wail by wiring its pressure points to an outside switch that can control its psychosis for your entertainment. Artists from Autechre and Aphex Twin to Peter Gabriel and Tom Waits have employed its alien, unpredictable sounds. The possibilities of this electronic palette expand with each discovery of a new bendable victim, ranging from children's educational toys to video games.

C-bending pioneer Reed Ghazala discovered the technique by accident. One day in 1967, he heard sudden crackles from a transistor amplifier inside his desk. "I thought, 'If this can happen by accident, what can happen by purpose?'" he recalls. Ghazala then spent the next 36 years refining the craft of triggering c-bends with switches wired to audio circuit boards.

It's the "animal nature" of spontaneous c-bent sounds that addicted him. Ghazala remarks, "[It's] like people, more than instruments, spewing art in seizures." By 1992, he began publishing his findings in *Experimental Musical Instruments* magazine, and later launched his *anti-theory.com* site, which serves as a Bible for the Net-based bender scene.

Ghazala builds and sells custom-bent instruments like the "Incantor" and the "Aleatron," which are both mutations of the two most popular c-bending victims: the Texas Instruments Speak & Spell and the Casio SK-1 sampler keyboard, respectively. Benders love the S&S—with its classic care-ful-lee ee-nunce-ee-ay-ting robotic voice—since its Tourettes-infected c-bent sounds can be easily

controlled, and they enjoy the SK-1 (the earliest affordable sampler one can curse into and then tune it) for its random, distorted eruptions. Both products are usually a steal at thrift shops, and can be easily c-bent with tools and parts cheaply sold at any electronics surplus shop. Ghazala recently sold an Aleatron to the Rolling Stones. "It's been said that flying saucers have buzzed Jagger numerous times over the years," he remarks. "An alien instrument for Mick seems long overdue."

If the audio device is battery-powered (doing this with any AC plug-in device will have 'em giggling at your funeral), it's fair game for c-bending. Audio experimentalist Tavys "Big Tex"

Ashcroft put a Furbee doll under the soldering iron, then demonically possessed it. His friend, Sacramento IDM artist Chachi Jones, c-bent a Casio Ratman keyboard and edited its caffeinated skitters into a symphony on his *Kavzio* EP. South Wales artist Tim Drage managed to c-bend the graphics chip in a battery-compatible PAL version copy of Super Mario Bros. for the Nintendo Entertainment System. The result is serious pixel pollution in the Mushroom Kingdom. "Choosing to bend Mario could be some kind of postmodern comment on iconic characters, I suppose," Drage comments. "And it's amusing to see poor Mario's world turn into a psychedelic nightmare."

Some benders believe their art is an act of defiance against the sound presets that often stifle electronic music. Paul Norris, who sells custom-bent instruments at his Circuitbenders e-shop, quips, "In the UK at the moment, you can get a number-one hit simply by dialing up the trance sawtooth preset on your virtual analogue synth [and] playing some obvious chord changes. I think that people are getting totally sick of this state of affairs." He adds that "it's the 'what-the-fuck-was-that?'" factor of circuit-bent instruments" that makes them radical.

However, other benders like Ashcroft sense that the art will soon hit a creative plateau. "I think it's both [a tool and a novelty]," he says. "People are getting a little too excited with it—most of its possible sounds can be identified as just 'circuit-bending.'" In contrast, Ghazala sees a bright future. "You'll never hear all of the possible [c-bending] sounds. Never. That's the beauty. [C-bending] is our first true alien terrain to explore. The saucer has landed—music is its language."

For more check out: www.anti-theory.com/soundart/circuitbend (Reed Ghazala's site), www.spiteyourface.com/cementimental (Tim Drage's showcase of c-bent NES games), www.circuitbenders.co.uk (Paul Norris's online shop for c-bent instruments) and www.chachijones.com (Our humble c-bending tutor's site).



POST-GEAR JUNKIES

Ernst Nathorst-Boos

With easy-to-use music programs like Reason and ReCycle, Propellerhead Software has made the virtual studio a possibility for both the computer shy and software nerd alike, all compatible with even the slowest, oldest machines. With its realistic-looking swinging cables, authentic studio-rack-mount-style visual display and massive array of analog-sounding synthesizers, samplers and effects, Reason has changed the way many pro and amateur electronic musicians create music. *XLR8R* sat down to talk with Ernst Nathorst-Boos about how the company built its colorful software suite.

XLR8R: *What models did you have in mind when you designed Reason?*

Ernst Nathorst-Boos: I started out in this stupid business in 1980 and I worked for a company that imported Linn, Sequential, Emu and Synergy equipment. Sequential Circuits was always a favorite. That's more or less what I grew up on. I was never that much into the modular stuff at that time. I started out before MIDI. Marcus, who's a bit younger, came in from the computer direction—he had a Commodore 64. Peter, the third owner and founder of the company, used to build synthesizers, vocoders and things like that. No matter what you'd say, he'd say, "Yeah, I built one of those in 1972 with two packets of chewing gum, a rubber band and a bit of tinfoil." The three of us come from slightly different backgrounds, but we're all post-gear junkies.

XLR8R: *What kinds of music were you listening to back then?*

EN-B: I was into that whole synth scene in the '80s, Depeche Mode, all these European bands, anyone who played synthesizers.

XLR8R: *Where do you get your ideas for upgrades?*

EN-B: We get a constant flow of requests and ideas from users and internal ideas from people on the team. The final decision is still the three of us [Marcus, Peter, Ernst]. We try to give each update a theme, so it's not just 80 different features spread out over the program. It takes the application in a direction. If you look at 1.0, it was very much geared towards Rebirth users. We tried to stay with that user base, with the music we and they understand.

XLR8R: *What improvements does Reason need?*

EN-B: There is so much we can do, it's extremely frustrating. It's all subtractive work. Literally, we have many hundreds of points that we'd like to get in, but we know that we're only going to be able to make ten percent of that for the next update. I can't really say what's coming, but there's room to do stuff everywhere in the program, in the rack and in the sequencer. We never intended for Reason to compete on the sequencer side of things. Since we don't have MIDI out, it's not really considered competition [with other sequencing programs]. When we first set out, we thought people would use ReWire, and just use that for sequencing. It turned out to be the opposite: people were jumping through hoops to not have to leave the program, doing all kinds of complicated stuff to stay in Reason for their whole production. Things happen when we see what people do with the program—we get songs in with ideas we never expected, like 300 devices in a rack. So we look at that, how to manage that, what can we do about it. Ideas grow on us as we look at what people do with the program.

XLR8R: *How are you fighting software piracy?*

EN-B: It's a problem for us. No one has any numbers about how much any software gets pirated. Also, no-one understands the mechanisms around it, how many people would actually buy the software if they couldn't get it without copy protection. It's a really difficult issue. Any restriction you put in usually hits the registered users first. And you don't want that—you want to make it as easy to use and as easy to get as possible. We try to work more with a carrot on a stick, to add value to the registration after the purchase.

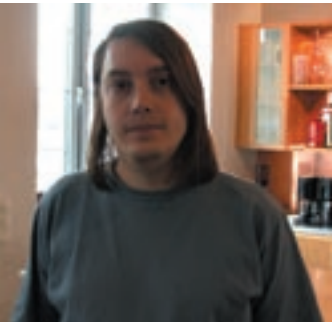
XLR8R: *What artists are using Reason these days?*

EN-B: Lots of people, but Propellerhead doesn't usually go after celebrity endorsements. In general, we have a good relation with artists, an honest relation: either we love their music or they love our product. Massive Attack are writing the foreword to the book [that noted Reason expert/ReFill author] Peff is writing, Liam from Prodigy is a big Reason freak. It's a great honor every time we hear that these great artists use our product, but I'm just as excited when amateurs get something out of it. Like Mark Vale, who teaches computer music to 13-year-olds in California. These kids have no musical experience, this was their first [music program]. They sent me all these songs, and he listed all their complaints, the things they liked, the things they hated, and they were just ruthless, in a good way. I get as much of a kick out of anyone who has an experience, it doesn't matter if they're celebrities or not. If the music is good and they had a good experience, that's what matters.

Reason 2.5 is out now. For more information check out www.propellerheads.de

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WORDS JESSE TERRY



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Reason's wallpaper commemorating their collaboration with Mad Professor

MARK OF EXCELLENCE

Equipment junkies should know the name Rob Warden in the same way that crate-diggers know the names of great producers. A childhood spent taking apart and reassembling electronics prepared Warden for a career as an equipment designer; his background as a house DJ ensured that his creations would always be firmly rooted in DJ culture. Now a product designer for Numark, Warden is the force behind the company's push to the forefront of the equipment realm, and is responsible for such creations as the astounding TTX-1 turntable.

XLR8R: *What do you try to bring to the table with your designs that you feel isn't being provided elsewhere?*

In a word, usability. There's a difference between bells and whistles and truly innovative features that are implemented intelligently with the DJ in mind. We want DJs to have a great experience using our products, and we design all Numark products from the ground up to make that happen.

XLR8R: *Is it more important to be constantly breaking new ground than it is to make equipment that simply performs the basic functions well?*

First and foremost, every Numark product has to perform the basic functions well. With that in mind, moving DJ technology forward inspires us all. Some products are entirely about innovation, like the new CDX, a slot-load CD player that lets you scratch CDs and MP3s while touching 12" vinyl. Then again, even small details are important, like a silkscreen on a mixer so text can be clearly read around all the knobs. Surprisingly, a lot of products out there overlook this. Serious consideration of how Numark products are used goes into even the most affordable equipment offered.

XLR8R: *What are your criteria for a well-designed piece of equipment?*

I think DJ gear is well designed when you can walk up to it in a dark club and start using it right away. If you can quickly get comfortable with the controls without reading the manual, then the designer's work has paid off.

XLR8R: *What do you consider the best design that you've done so far?*

I'm really proud of what we accomplished

with the TTX and the Numark turntable line, but most recently, I'd have to say the Numark PPD9000, our new fully digital rack mixer. It has a backlit dashboard-style control strip and these fluid-like level meters that glow red at the tips when the audio is being compressed. It's really fun and easy to use on the outside, but on the inside, it's a digital powerhouse. It's really the total package.

XLR8R: *Do you think it's necessary to have a background in the area you're designing for in order to be in touch with your audience and truly be able to design for them?*

I don't think having a background is necessary, but there are advantages. For instance, by having an understanding of DJ culture, you already have a jump on all the necessary DJ product research. Being a DJ also keeps you in touch with all the outlets to get design feedback firsthand from the source. Of course, sometimes it's appropriate to shut that all off and look at a product from the point of view of someone who's just getting started in DJing.

XLR8R: *What was the theory behind the TTX turntable, and how much longer can turntables remain viable in the face of growing digital DJing technology?*

The theory behind the TTX turntable was simple: to offer the most superior DJ turntable imaginable. Numark broke ground in construction methods, control arrangements, motor design, and even the tone arm assembly. We didn't start with the question, "How could we adapt the conventional hi-fi turntable design to suit the needs of the DJ?" Instead we asked, "What type of turntable does a DJ really need?" Everyone has their own opinions on what will happen to turntables, and it always gets to be this heated discussion between analog purists and "digital" DJs. With the advent of vinyl-emulating CD, it's hard to say what will happen to turntables themselves. I keep hearing about vinyl presses that are breaking down—the manufacturing equipment is antiquated and there are no parts for repairs. I think as long as there are records there will be decks, but it won't be long before performance CD players coexist alongside more turntable setups.

www.numark.com

FROM MIXERS IN THE '80S TO TURNTABLES TODAY, NUMARK HAS ALWAYS LED THE CHANGE FORWARD.

WORDS PETE BABB



Numark TTX1 sketch



Numark PPD9000



Numark TTX1



SCRATCHED DISCS

American Audio Pro-Scratch 2

FIVE YEARS AGO, MOST DJS WOULDN'T BE SEEN DEAD WITH A PAIR OF CD PLAYERS. BUT WITH THE ADVENT OF SERIOUS CDJ TECHNOLOGY, THINGS ARE CHANGING. AS MANUFACTURERS BATTLE IT OUT IN THE PRODUCT MARKET, THE WORLD'S TURNTABLIS ARE READY TO GO HEAD TO HEAD IN THE DIGITAL REALM.

WORDS PAUL SULLIVAN

What do Grand Wizard Theodore, Public Enemy's DJ Lord, beat-juggling inventor Steve Dee, Jazzy Jeff, DJ Swamp, Biz Markie, Nature, Roonie G, DJ Brayks, Ming & FS, Kutmasta Kurt, Cut Chemist, DJ Quick, Nu Mark and DJ Craze all have in common? They're all pretty hot on a pair of turntables of course, but something else too: they've all embraced digital turntablism.

You might not know it, but CD scratching is on the up. In the last couple of years, seismic shifts in technology have enabled more and more 'tablists to embrace the future. Three main manufacturers—Pioneer, American Audio and Denon—are currently behind the push and all have created CDJ players that emulate the vinyl turntablism experience infinitely better than anything that's been made before.

The first digital turntable to have any impact was Pioneer's CDJ1000 MK I, unveiled back in July 2001. The key to the system is a grooved, touch-sensitive jog wheel that allows records to be stopped and scratched at any time. There is also an internal memory that remembers cue and loop points, and allows tracks to be remixed live, and a memory card that recalls edit points for tracks. That memory card feature lets DJs travel to clubs equipped with CDJ1000s carrying just the card and their CDs.

Having sold (according to their count) "tens of thousands" of MK I in the UK alone, Pioneer are now developing an MK 2, which enhances several features and throws in a spare memory card for the same price. "We originally designed the CDJ1000 for digital turntablism and vinyl DJs to use," states UK sales manager Martin Dockree. "We certainly didn't want to say vinyl was old-fashioned or rubbish. It was more to give vinyl DJs the edge over competitors and allow them to add another creative element into their sets."

Building on Pioneer's success, new models arrived, including Denon's DN S5000 and



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American Audio's Pro-Scratch 1 and Velocity CD units, the latter two of which utilize their own unique technology known as Digital Scratching 2.0, which enhances the jog wheel's response.

All the tables have their own pros and cons, but share a generally true-to-vinyl experience and boast incredible potential for creativity.

Many, but not all, have abandoned vinyl completely in favor of the new format. One of the principal digital practitioners in the world is Gerald "World Wide" Webb, who was a consultant for the CDJ1000 (as well as the Pioneer CDJ 700s, DJM600, CMX5000 and EFX-500, and American Audio's Pro-scratch 2 and Velocity Dual CD player). He also runs the seminal portal www.digitalscratch.com (up since 2001), conceived and moderated the world's first digital scratch clinic (for *DJ Times Magazine* at the 2000 International DJ Expo), has released the world's first digital battle-break record, 2000's *Digital Scratch Tools Volume 1* (Under Pressure Records), and even battled the Invisibl Skratch Piklz and Qbert in Atlantic City in the only ever vinyl-versus-CD competition.

"I saw more power and control over the music being put in the DJ's hands," he explains. "Looping features really blew me away. I knew that eventually CDs would catch up with vinyl for actual scratching, but I didn't think it would happen as fast as it did. CDs just offered so many advantages, like seamless looping, DSP effects and hot starts, making live remixing on the fly a reality. I just couldn't resist. Then factor in portability, durability (no more warped or scratched records), and availability of songs, and I was convinced."

The Scratch Academy in NYC—created by the late, great Jam Master Jay—boasts many of America's top turntablists and DJs as lecturers, including Grand Wizard Theodore, Biz Markie, Rob Swift and Grandmaster Caz.

"We don't have any CD players installed yet, but we are running lessons," claims Rob Principe, one of the academy's organizers. "There are a growing number of people coming to us wanting to use them, mainly CDJ1000s. All the lecturers in the school are aware of it and no-one is against it. We're all about embracing anything that has to do with turntablism and DJing, anything that helps advance the art form is good for what we do. The introduction has been made and the argument of functionality has been established. Now it's just the adoption of it."

Despite the level of endorsement, there is still a stigma about CDs. "[That's] fading, though" reckons Auburn, Alabama's DJ Brayks, a contracted DJ/turntablist for Pioneer. "With wider acceptance from DJs, the club-goers are going to see their favorite DJ playing a CD or ten during their sets, and they're just gonna concentrate on dancing and having a good time [rather] than wondering if the static they hear is actually from a record, or a CD recording of a record."

There have been other digital formats aside from CDs entering the market, such as the laptop-enabled, DJ Craze-endorsed Stanton Final Scratch—a software interface that syncs with a vinyl turntable, allowing the user to play MP3s with a computer using a pair of time-coded records.

"As with just about every other aspect of our lives, computers have [changed] and continue to change the way we live and DJ," concludes Gerald. "The best part is that it's still evolving. Recent innovations include moving-platter CD players with a record-like slipmat that controls the CD audio, the ability to read and control two different tracks from the CDs at the same time with one CD player, and .wav file displays that show the entire song at a glance. CD recorders have had a big impact as well. Now just about everyone can afford to burn their own tracks and compilations. Digital turntablism is growing and is a very hot topic right now. Finally I think people are starting to see it as the future of the art form as a whole."

www.pioneerelectronics.com, www.denon.com, www.americandj.com

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The concept of a "battle record" for scratch DJs has quickly been adapted to CDs, and the market is now filling up with things like *Octopus Booger Breaks* and other outlandishly titled scratch sample CDs. This 99-track scratch sentence disc has virtually every standard and old-school battle sound, plus loads of video game noises, drums loops and synth tones.

PROS: Great for sampling producers, scratch DJs, arranged in sentences, 60 minutes.

CONS: Fidelity is poor, some samples poorly mastered.

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Some musicians sample other cultures. The UK's Richard Blair lives them. In 1992, while working as an engineer for Peter Gabriel's Real World label, Blair went on holiday to Colombia. He liked it enough to move there the next year and stay for three more. Quickly assimilated into the Bogotá scene, he began producing and engineering records for people like Carlos Vives who were creating a fusion of Latin roots and contemporary sounds. As Sidestepper, Blair took this aesthetic one step further on *Southern Star* (Deep South), which mixed the sounds of Bogotá with UK drum & bass. Sidestepper came into its own when Blair brought in successful Colombian songwriter Ivan Benevides to provide vocals for 1994's "Logozo" single, which led to *More Grip* (Palm). This year has seen the release of the third Sidestepper album, *3 a.m. (In Beats We Trust)* (Palm) as well as a series of well-received live performances in Central and North America. On *3 a.m.*, Blair and Benevides have moved farther down the path in search of a new pop music, and Blair's production is noticeably lighter than on *More Grip*, producing a smooth groove that draws on Colombia, Cuba and Jamaica for inspiration, but is entirely its own territory.

XLR8R: Were you relatively familiar with this music before you went to Colombia?

Richard Blair: No, I didn't really know about salsa or anything. I started working with a woman called Toto La Momposina as an engineer at Real World and made a cumbia record with her. That just blew my head off when I heard it...Then I started to get into salsa, and once I got past the top-end kind of clatter—there's a lot of metal in Latin music—and started to hear basslines and see also the kind of fury and passion of the parties, it was a real eye-opener.

XLR8R: How important to your overall sound is the use of a proper studio versus the computer-in-the-bedroom approach?

RB: The computer/bedroom approach is great for relaxed writing and recording. However, it was vital for the sound of *3 a.m.* to mix in an old-school studio, Mark Angelo in London, and use Pro Tools as a tape machine, passing all the channels up through the Neve desk.

XLR8R: Was your production technique/gear choice different on *3 a.m.* than on *More Grip*?

RB: Yes, I worked with less gear on *3 a.m.*, so that I could work in Colombia in a mobile situation. Also, the idea was to write and record at the same time, keeping the vibe as fresh

as possible. And at every stage of the process, whether it was writing, recording or even mixing, we got people to do something that they wouldn't normally do. On *More Grip*, we consciously asked for the Latin repertoire, you know "just do your thing," but this time we wanted to move away from that: people were coming up with new patterns, or they were singing in a way they'd never sung before.

XLR8R: Which studio equipment comes into play in your songwriting process?

RB: Mac G4 with Logic/ Pro Tools, Novation Bass Station, Mackie 12-channel mixer, Joe Meek VC compressor, Oram Octasonic mic preamps.

XLR8R: What balance of software and hardware do you use?

RB: Some soft synths—Pro 52, Battery—and lots of live recording.

XLR8R: How do you use gear to translate the album to the live show?

RB: We use Akai MPC sampler/sequencers and Vestax DJ mixers, plus Line 6 pedals, the Bass Station, and some keyboards. We run everything through the DJ mixers so that the structure is open and we can control it live.

XLR8R: What drew you to Colombia to begin with?

RB: I just got a glimpse that first visit [in '92], and then when I went back to live there, I just fell in love with everything: the way of life, the music, the people especially. Great people—they have a lot of time for each other, very spontaneous, the best parties I'd ever seen, the most beautiful girls I'd ever seen, the countryside is amazing, and a very rich musical culture. There's so much music there you could spend a lifetime trying to explore it.

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IN THE STUDIO SIDESTEPPER

AN ENGLISHMAN TELLS US HOW TO MAKE A DIGITAL CUMBIA.
TEXT PETER NICHOLSON



In Sidestepper's studio (from left): Apple G4 Tower, Logic 6 box and screenshot, Digidesign ProTools Digi002, Mackie CFX12



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Berlin's Robert Henke—a solo artist who records as Monolake and designs software for Germany's Ableton, the creators of all-in-one recording software Live—is a tall, fidgety, bespeckled guy who's probing green-grey eyes rarely stay fixed on one point for very long. He's as inquisitive as a squirrel in a redwood forest, darting from tree to tree and gathering acorns—or, in Henke's case, learning everything he can about computer sound processes. His first album, 1997's *Hongkong* on Germany's Chain Reaction, was a high point in the development of mid-'90s minimal techno, and it was followed by the equally intriguing *Interstate* on his own Monolake/Imbalance label. Monolake's latest epic, *Momentum*, came out on Imbalance in late October. As if he weren't busy enough, Ableton is set to launch Live version 3.0, which Henke co-designed. We caught up with him this past summer at Mutek.

XLR8R: *You wear many different hats—you're a programmer, artist, label owner and software representative. Is it a privilege to be able to work on the software you perform and compose with?*

Robert Henke: Yes, but it's a burden too. I have this profound interest in creating software—I like the process, I like being involved in it. But on the other hand, I have to split my time—that's when it gets difficult. In the last few years, I've been so involved with my Ableton work that I rarely found the time to make new music.

XLR8R: *How many people around the world are using Live?*

RH: I'm not in the sales department, but I think it's somewhere between ten to twenty thousand people. That's users—not every one of those people actually paid for the software.

XLR8R: *Still, there's always software that gets such a good reputation that people don't want to use a pirated copy, they want to support the ideas and people behind the work, right?*

RH: This has a lot to do with the image a company has. For instance, if I look at [San Francisco's] Cycling '74, and I know Joshua [Kit Clayton] and Jeremy [Bernstein] and all the people working there, and I know how much of their whole lives they devote to making software, I would feel really guilty if I *didn't* buy it. With Ableton it's a little bit similar. We're small, [and although] we have a marketing department and

all that shit, we're still a bunch of idealistic people. We really try and communicate with our users. We have ten developers—of these ten about seven usually write comments on our user forum. So the people actually *making* the software are communicating with the users.

XLR8R: *Can you tell me a little bit about the sound effects and filters the program has?*

RH: I'd prefer to make a few general statements about the philosophy of the effects. What I figured out when I was working with VST plug-ins was that the most essential thing any effect has to provide is a simple and useable interface. The sound quality must also be good, but an effect is really just a tool for changing the sound. So, if you turn a knob [on the effects patch in the program], something satisfying has to happen. If the knob has a range from zero to 200, then something interesting should be happening from zero to 10, from 30 to 40, from 70 to 80, and so on. Sometimes you have software or hardware where some interesting stuff [happens] in a very narrow range and the rest is uninteresting. So I want to treat the effects, as with everything else in Live, with an instrument appeal. If possible, every knob should make something fun happen when it's played. And that leads us to the idea that things need to be simple.

XLR8R: *Have people been requesting new features?*

RH: Sure, they always do. For instance, a loud minority wants to have full MIDI integration. But on the other hand, MIDI sequencing the way Cubase or Logic does it would make the software a lot more detailed and complicated to use.

XLR8R: *Have you discovered anything new about the program in your performances or compositions?*

RH: I had an experience while producing recently where I misused the time stretch and suddenly I created a sound that was a little bit like a child's choir. Normally I wouldn't use this type of sound in my Monolake tracks, but somehow it worked. So it was a wonderful situation where a well-known technical process was given an input signal and delivered an unpredictable result. That was something I really appreciated, and it made one of my last pieces nice as well.

www.monolake.de, www.ableton.de

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THE RIGHT MIXER FOR THE JOB?

While Technics turntables and Sony headphones are ubiquitous in the DJ world, mixers don't necessarily conform to the same uniform nature. Hence, selecting the "right" mixer is much more subjective and depends greatly on what the user wants to achieve while performing.

Behringer's new professional mixer, the **Behringer DJX700**, does a good job at balancing the standards in what you might expect in a quality DJ mixer—including four dual-input stereo channels and one ULN microphone channel, with a three-band equalizer on each channel, easy-to-use monitor cueing, and smooth faders—with some nifty perks, like the Auto BPM counter to help you sync up tracks with ease, the XPG 3D surround function to beef up your sound, the three-band kill switches and EQ, and 47 digital effect presets, such as echo, delay, reverb and flanger.

Hooking up the Behringer is pretty straightforward, with a logical interface that allows the user to get the music up and running in minutes. The VCA (Voltage Controlled Amplifier) controlled crossfader is a nice touch, though it's hard to tell how much "better" it is than most crossfaders currently being made. The three-band kill switches, located on either side of the crossfader, are cool, enabling the user to drop out the highs, mids or lows with ease. The BPM counter really does make a difference in mixing, especially those pesky beats that go in and out of time, and works just as efficiently with vinyl as it does CDs. While some of the effects are impressive, it takes some time to figure out what each one does and how much of a difference they actually make to your sets. So, unless you're a Richie Hawtin type, obsessively tweaking various frequencies, the effects options aren't all that compelling. And it's unfortunate the only inputs are RCA. It'd be helpful to have at least one other option, either 1/4 inch or XLR. That said, the DJX700 still seems like a good deal for the cost. *Tim Pratt*
Behringer DJX700, MSRP: 269.99, www.behringer.com

>> THE THREE-BAND KILL SWITCHES, LOCATED ON EITHER SIDE OF THE CROSS-FADER, ARE COOL, ENABLING THE USER TO DROP OUT THE HIGHS, MIDS OR LOWS WITH EASE.

ALL PRO SOUND

Long regarded in professional recording studios for its clarity and accuracy, Digidesign's Pro Tools software has become the Taj Mahal of digital studio recording software—an elegant palace of finely crafted audio artifacts. A few years back, Digidesign entered the home studio market with the sequencing package simply known as Pro Tools 001, and also began marketing a simplified version of Pro Tools dubbed LE. With the new 002 comes **Digidesign Pro Tools LE 6.1**, which makes some helpful additions and much needed improvements. Given Digidesign's history of advanced engineering, the company often prefers to rely on its proprietary creations as opposed to shared standards. But with LE comes crucial support for Rewire, which allows much more interaction between Pro Tools and popular home studio software like Propellerhead's Reason and Ableton Live. The software also enables you to record and play back up to 32 tracks of audio at sample rates of up to 96 kHz. Pro Tools now offers full MIDI support as well. The heart of Pro Tools remains the quality of the sound editing functions, and LE proves most useful as a mastering environment. One drawback: although you're able to use plug-ins, common formats such as VST remain unsupported. Cross-platform and bundled with the MBox or 002, the new LE remains very useful software, a nice addition to the hardware and a good introduction to the world of Pro Tools. *Rob Riddle*
Digidesign Pro Tools LE 6.1 MSRP: \$79.99, www.digidesign.com



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QUICKIE

EJAY TECHNO 4

Amid the myriad of music software, Ejay once again stands out, delivering a program packed with high-quality samples, a simple drag-and-drop interface, and an added VJ section designed so efficiently it's an understatement to say the software is user-friendly. This is, hands-down, a top choice for those just beginning to learn about production. **PROS:** Absolutely stunning graphics to match the great sound quality, simple pop-up instructions that replace any need for a manual, an online archive that offers a decent range of free samples to import. **CONS:** PC-friendly only, somewhat limiting if you don't favor hard house or trance. **MSRP: \$39**
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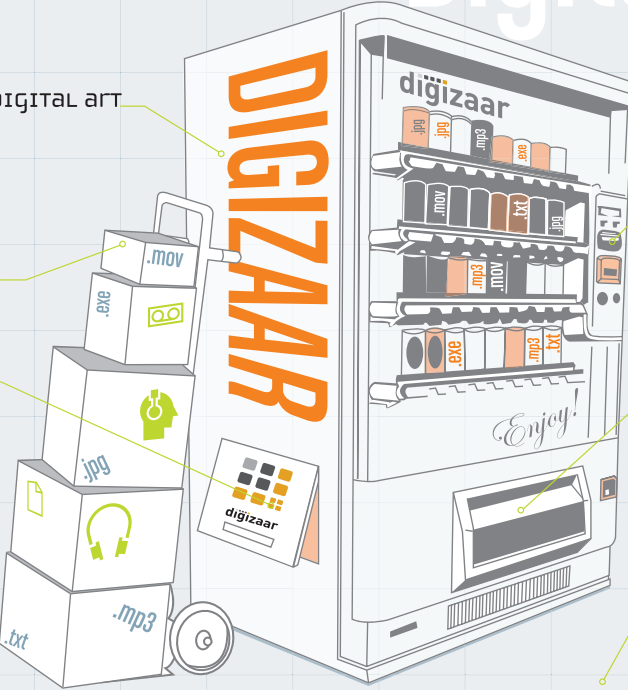
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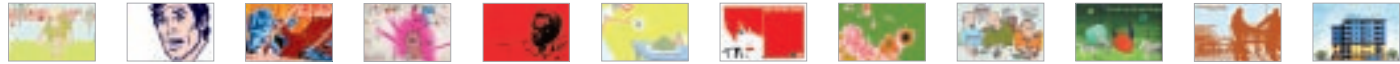


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Renowned for its excellent sound engineering, E-mu has been wrapping up its sample catalog in a series of outboard units called Command Stations. The E-mu PX-7 Command Station is the newest in the line, shipping with a fresh set of acoustic and electronic drum sounds. This module is an excellent way to program realistic (and not so realistic) drum sequences. Using familiar grid and step multi-track pattern sequencing in combination with the 13 velocity-sensitive pads, the PX-7 is a great way to make beats. Featuring a huge 128-voice polyphony, 32mb of on-board samples, and the ability to add any of E-mu's Proteus SoundROMs or download drum sequences using the USB port, the options are extensive. For the beginning producer, the PX-7 can function as your outboard source for sounds, but also act as a MIDI controller by assigning the 40 knobs and buttons, using a touch-sensitive control pad and playing the pads as a one-octave keyboard. With six analog and stereo S/PDIF outs, this machine is a versatile addition to the studio. *Andrew Smith*

>> THIS MODULE IS AN EXCELLENT WAY TO PROGRAM REALISTIC (AND NOT SO REALISTIC) DRUM SEQUENCES.

LOUNGIN' AROUND

If names like Herbie Hancock, Lonnie Liston Smith and Weldon Irvine make you instinctively reach for your wallet on a Saturday at the record shop, you're probably familiar with the unmistakable reverberating sounds of the Fender Rhodes keyboard. Applied Acoustics have designed the "physical-modeling" Lounge Lizard plug-in to allow you to get those great sounds of the '70s that you've stored on your computer onto your favorite sequencer. The Lounge Lizard is set up with two main sections: one for determining aspects of the Rhodes sound, and another for altering that sound with excellent wah, phaser, tremolo and delay effects. The variables of a different Rhodes sound are all modeled beautifully—you can control the stiffness and force of the mallet, the tone of the fork and the positioning of the pickup inside the virtual Rhodes. If you're lazy, there are plenty of excellent presets all set, such as stage, clear, funky, sustain and wurly (Wurlitzer organ). Of course, anyone would want to get their hands on the real thing, but the Lounge Lizard is much more versatile—you'd have to have a hundred different Rhodes to get the sounds this plug-in does. Oh, and it looks real pretty too. *Jesse Terry*

Applied Acoustics Lounge Lizard MSRP: \$179.00, www.applied-acoustics.com/lounge lizard.htm

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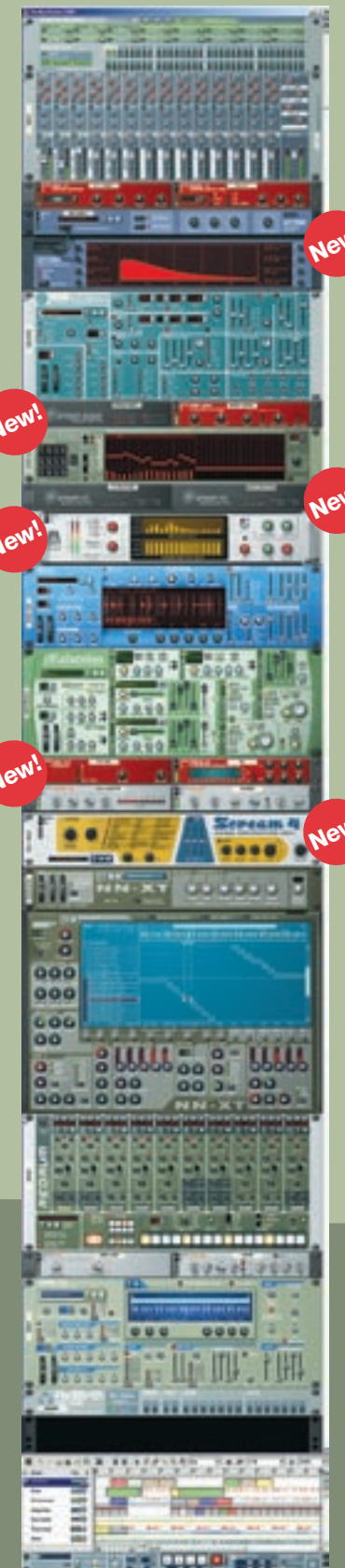
PROS: Definitely looks nicer than your average CD-R.

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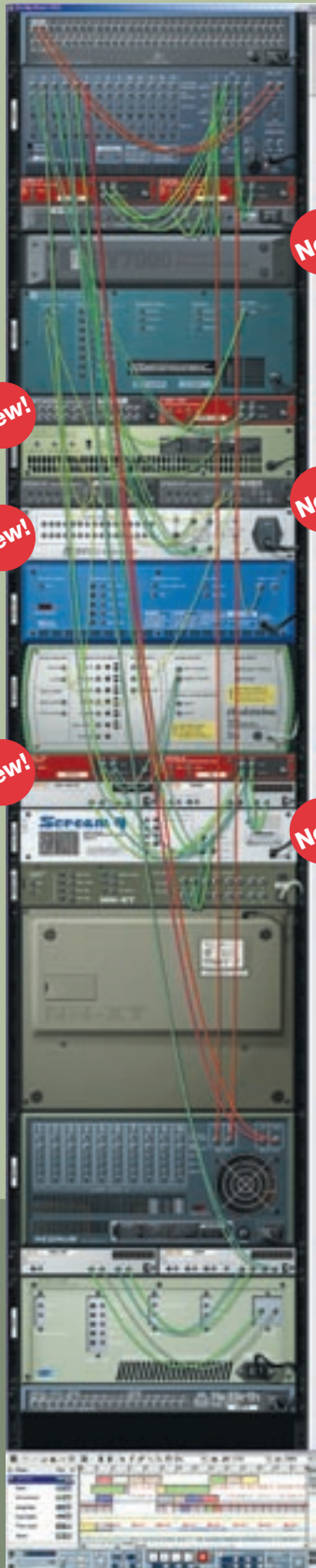
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SOFTWARE

SEQUENCE-SATIONAL

In the land of high-end audio sequencers, most people think of Pro Tools first. But there is an alternative: **Steinberg Nuendo 2.0**, thought by many to be the best-sounding software available. Nuendo is Steinberg's flagship sequencer and media production software, a high-level alternative to the less expensive Cubase SX. Nuendo doesn't rely on external hardware; but if you want to, you can set up dedicated computers to handle effect-processing, VST instruments, video, etc., with different users controlling features on different computers, or via high-speed Internet. Nuendo 2.0 has unlimited VST and ReWire channels, so you can combine MIDI, VST instruments and audio (like live drums, guitar, vocals), working simultaneously with programs like Ableton's Live or Propellerhead's Reason. What Nuendo has that other programs lack is a stunning array of surroundsound options (up to 10.2), superior sound quality and a fully configurable setup.

Once you've learned what you want from the program, it becomes seamlessly easy to use, and indispensable for film and television situations. You can also import files from nearly any other format—Pro Tools, Cubase, Digital Performer, etc. With a Nuendo system, you can bring anyone, using any format, into your studio. While not for those on a budget, Nuendo offers top-notch production quality for those with exacting ears and specific audio, game, post-production and electronic music needs. *Jesse Terry*
Steinberg Nuendo 2.0, MSRP: \$1499, www.nuendo.com

FIRE IT UP

Anyone who's bought a USB audio device like the M-Audio Ozone controller for their laptops can tell you, FireWire is the future. Limited bandwidth and port space means one thing if you need to buy a small, inexpensive way to get audio into your computer without selling the rights to your first-born child for a Hammerfall system.

The **M-Audio FireWire 410** is cheap (compared to other FireWire interfaces like the MOTU 828) and comes with two mic preamps with phantom power (although four would have been a nicer touch). Why does anyone need four ins and 10 outs in the first place? Four is arguably the minimum for recording nice-sounding analog drums, while ten outs are best for surround sound applications. A minimum of four outs lets you preview sounds if you're using programs like Native Instruments, Traktor or Ableton's Live, so you can cue up samples and tracks before your audience hears them. The FireWire 410 also comes with two headphone jacks, a nice feature that helps out for collaborative efforts. *Jesse Terry*

M-Audio FireWire 410, MSRP: \$499, www.m-audio.com

QUICKIE

GENIUS DEVELOPMENTS DJ BAG

A sleek-looking DJ bag with all the elements a record-slinger wants and needs. The bag has padded backpack and shoulder straps, sturdy metal clips and a rugged, shock-resistant base. Pocket dispersal includes two on the sides, four inside, two front zippers and one on the flap. A kangaroo couldn't do better.

PROS: Stylish Austrian construction with lots o' pockets. Holds 50 records.

CONS: Laptop nerds will love the dedicated pocket.

MSRP: \$109

www.geniusdevelopments.com



>> WHAT NUENDO HAS THAT OTHER PROGRAMS LACK IS A STUNNING ARRAY OF SURROUND SOUND OPTIONS, SUPERIOR SOUND QUALITY AND A FULLY CONFIGURABLE SETUP.

HEAVY ROTATION

More knobs, more fun? That seems to be the logic behind the recent spate of rotary mixer offerings. Allen & Heath, Rane and Vestax all have very excellent circular knob mixers on the market, due in part to nostalgic DJs pinning for the good old days of the Paradise Garage and that generation's mixer choice: the Urei. The demand also comes from rotary mixer's tactile layout and fierce volume controls. If you've ever heard one of New York's Shelter nightclub's DJs—Timmy Regisford, DJ Pierre, Ron Trent—part of their traditional technique for mixing vocal and tribal house tunes is to constantly adjust the EQ knobs, cutting low frequencies so vocals soar on their own, and dropping the music's volume down from time to time to its lowest point, up high, down low and so on, like a dive bombing F-15 jet.

Enter the **PVDJ Rotomix**, the Mississippi company's latest addition to their growing line of DJ mixers. And DJs rejoice—Peavey didn't over-do it. This isn't some souped-up digital version of the classic rotary mixer—it's the basics, and it's *loud*. In addition to its most important basic feature—the aluminum rotary knobs—the Rotomix has six stereo channels, balanced stereo outputs (for higher output levels and sound clarity), and a three-band EQ with soft boost and frequency kill on each channel. *That's it*. And that's all a truly skilled blending DJ needs.

The Rotomix is cleanly designed, well-built and exceptionally navigable. It's mixers like these that encourage DJs to play four- and six-hour sets and get into the intricacies of every groove. At the end of the day, a DJ should be concentrating on their selection, the quality of the records and how they fit together in interesting ways and not have to worry that you're accidentally adjusting a built-in sound effect instead of the low-frequency cut. But I'll step off my soapbox and hopefully, next time I step in to a club to spin, a Rotomix will be waiting in the booth. *Derek Grey*

PVDJ Rotomix, MSRP: \$899.99, www.peaveydj.com

>> VERY SIMILAR TO SONIC FOUNDRY'S WINDOWS-EXCLUSIVE ACID AND THE MANY OTHER LOOP-BASED MUSIC PROGRAMS THAT HAVE FOLLOWED IN IT'S FOOTSTEPS.

FULL CIRCLE SOUND

The recent evolution of Apple's hardware and software products has been pretty exciting to watch. The pioneering company has been pushing the envelope of personal computing with beautifully designed products (like the new G5, hot!) and a whole array of easy-to-use apps. So it's not surprising that they've finally thrown down the gauntlet and created a music composition program, completing a full-circle of creative applications.

Apple Soundtrack was originally created for users of Apple's video editing software, Final Cut Pro, so that video editors could easily add music to their compositions. Considering the ease of use of this loop-based music maker, and the fact that it ships with over 4,000 samples that encompass many genres (ambient, downtempo, trance, electro), the decision was made to launch Soundtrack as a stand-alone. Very similar to Sonic Foundry's Windows-exclusive Acid and the many other loop-based music programs that have followed in its footsteps, all you need to do when making tunes with Soundtrack is find the samples you want to use in the file browser (sorted by genre, instrument type, etc.) and drag them onto the composition window. Change the tempo, set the key and grab video clips, WAV, AIFF or Acid sound files to use in your masterpiece. It's surprising how quickly a song can come together. Not only is Apple's visual interface one of the cleanest and most intuitive out there, but the samples provided are very nicely produced and quite fun to play with.

Soundtrack is a great solution for Mac users who want to use Acid and also a very fun tool for getting started with the music-making process. *Andrew Smith*

Apple Soundtrack, MSRP: \$299, www.apple.com

>> IT'S MIXERS LIKE THESE THAT ENCOURAGE DJs TO PLAY FOUR- AND SIX-HOUR SETS AND GET INTO THE INTRICACIES OF EVERY GROOVE.



REASON

Reason 2.5 is here.

X-tra effects!

Reason 2.5 has arrived. If you enjoy luxury reverberation, flexible vocoding, creative distortion, instant fatness and advanced signal routing, this is your kind of update.

Free to registered Reason 2.0 users!

Introducing Reason 2.5, the X-tra FX update. With four new amazing sounding effect units and two handy signal routing utilities, this update adds new dimensions to Reason's world of sound. And to yours.

The **RV7000 Advanced Reverb** is a professional, high-end reverberation unit in your Reason rack. Delivering everything from rich, transparent halls to multitaps and spring reverb simulation, this is the reverb of reverbs.

The **BV-512 Digital Vocoder** is a top-notch vocoding unit with a twist. It vocodes. It equalizes. And with its 4 to 512 frequency bands, it's capable of both analog grit and digital crispness.

The **Scream 4 Sound Destruction Unit**: all your favourite distortion pedals and overdrive boxes transformed into a Reason device. It packs ten evil distortion types ranging from tube to tape to digital, plus a crude EQ and a speaker modelling section for adding warmth and body. This is creative crushing.

The **UN-16 Unison** is a rack version of the classic "unison" effect. Run your sounds through here, and they come out a little fatter, a little more stereophonic.

Spider Audio and **Spider CV** are utility devices for creative signal path routing. You can now process one synth with several different effects simultaneously, or trigger multiple instruments from one matrix pattern.

Only in Reason 2.5.

For more details: www.propellerheads.se

Reason 2.5 is exclusively distributed in the US and UK by **M-Audio**

propellerhead
SOFTWARE

ASK ROBOT SPEAK!

It's *XLR8R*'s x-cellent gear advice column, where you the reader put your most confounding questions to the music technology experts at computer music shop RobotSpeak. Got a query about your bedroom studio or DJ gear? Simply send it to: askrobotspeak@xlr8r.com and your answer will appear in next issue.

Dear RobotSpeak,

What are the three most versatile, useful or otherwise just plain cool soft synth programs I can use with Nuendo or my Logic set-ups?

Dan Coley, Baltimore, MD

Dan,
Your inquiry brings to mind a recent visit to RobotSpeak by a pair of somewhat quirky Swedish lads who, it just so happens, after twiddling with the analog synths for a while, boiled it down to a question similar to yours: "What do you think is the best software you sell?" My business partner Steve began to launch into the usual praise for Ableton Live when the two defiantly shot back "*wrong answer!*" (I think there was pointing involved as well)

It turns out we were lucky enough to have a "surprise" visit by Ernst Nathorst-Boos and Johan Lindstrom, the top brass at Propellerheads, the company that brought Reason to the world. At the risk of sounding like a broken record (not that there's anything wrong with that), Reason 2.5, for around \$350, is the most useful soft synth you can buy. A never-ending rack of drum machines, subtractive synths, samplers and more, your modu-

lar Reason rack can be as simple as a basic rhythm section or as complex as the most monstrously modular synthesizer armada, complete with reverbs, vocoders and distortion boxes.

But Reason isn't the end-all. A bit more bank buys you Native Instrument's Reaktor 4, far and away the most versatile and debatably the best sounding synth in the virtual world. Reaktor, like Reason, is a modular soft synth. Unlike Reason, however, Reaktor's fully modular architecture lets you get "under the hood," down to the nuts and bolts of your instruments. Replace a filter, change out an oscillator, and even give your mutation a custom paintjob. You can then upload your creation to Native Instruments' online library, where it is available for download to registered Reaktor users the world over. The best part about Reaktor is that even if you never create an instrument from scratch, the included set of instruments is pretty damn complete. Drum machines, subtractive synths, samplers, sequencers, granular synthesis blah-di-blahs, you name it. In addition, you can spend hours perusing the online library for thousands of instruments created by Reaktor's global community, all available for free download. It just never ends.

Finally, let's not forget that it *is* possible to have too many options. For instance, how many times have I simply gone fishing for a certain bass sound and have found myself, hours later, completely enamored by some Reaktor creation, having totally forgotten the sonic forest for the trees? For those of you with similarly wandering spans of attention, I recommend Trilogy, Spectrasonics' virtual bass module. What you get is a *huge* library of editable electric, acoustic and synthetic bass patches, sampled with badass accuracy by sound design guru Eric Persing. The two things you most likely need in your music are drum and bass sounds, and I guarantee you'll find that the bass you're looking for is just a tweak away in Trilogy.

Now if I may extend your question to the hardware world, RobotSpeak recently began stocking a few pieces of new gear, the value of which demands attention from the bedroom studio set.

First, the line of large diaphragm condenser microphones by Studio Projects, most of which sell for under \$350, and easily sound as good or better than those costing an order of magnitude more. Second, the new FireWire410 audio interface sells for under \$400 and brings impeccable 24bit 96kHz audio to your laptop in a fully portable package. And its extra-bright multi-colored LEDs make it as fun to look at as it is to listen to. *Alan RobotSpeak*



INTERFACE WITH MY WONDER BOX

Steadily becoming a staple of the computer musician's studio, the audio interface is an excellent way to bring vocals, external sound sources or anything with an analog output into the mix when making music. One of the more affordable, yet quality-imbued devices of its type, the Tascam US-122 USB Audio/MIDI Interface allows users to feed in and out two channels of analog line-level sound, and also has two XLR phantom-powered mic inputs. Adding features like these to your recording setup opens some pretty exciting options to the laptop performer's repertoire, including processing live vocals or external instruments through your computer, or (even more excitingly) adding crunchy old effects like an analog delay by using the US-122 to insert them into the recording chain. Haven't you always wanted to bring back to life that old Juno 106 sitting in your closet, gathering dust? The MIDI interface is quite handy in this

situation; it's a great all-in-one solution for synching the sequencing and audio of out-board gear. Tascam have made things even easier by bundling the US-122 with Steinberg's Cubasis VST sequencing software and its Gigastudio 24 audio editing software, and by supporting both Mac and PC, shipping with drivers for ASIO, WDM, GSIF and Apple Core Audio (OS X). If you're looking for something simple to bring traditional musical instruments into your computer recording environment, you can't go wrong with Tascam and a little box like this. *Andrew Smith*

Tascam US-122 USB Audio/MIDI Interface, MSRP: \$269, www.tascam.com



QUICKIE

T-RACKS ANALOG MODELED MASTERING PLUG-IN

A cool set of VST plug-ins designed for the home studio engineer, featuring analog modeled compressors, limiters and EQs. Helps balance out levels, making your tracks ready to play on a variety of audio systems.

PROS: Good for the mid- and low-level home-based musician. Sensitive EQ, helpful presets for mastering beginners.

CONS: Doesn't come with an experienced set of ears, not as good for live instruments as it is for electronic musicians.

MSRP: \$399

www.t-racks.com



NATIVE GETTING RESTLESS

With their wonderful cross-platform software programs for making and mashing sound (in Windows 98/2000/ME/XP, Mac OS 9 or X), Native Instruments software continues to earn their reputation for quality and utility. Two of their better recent updates are **Native Instruments Reaktor 4** and **Absynth 2**. Reaktor 4 provides a full sound creation and manipulation environment that's highly programmable and adaptable to most any particular situation and need. You can create, modify or stack a range of synthesizers and sound generators, effects, loops and other live or studio tools. Reaktor 4 is fun straight out of the box, but the software works best for those who delve into it, get lost a bit and learn to customize it to their composition needs. Some of the program's possibilities can be rather time-consuming and overwhelming, and with such serious sound-processing power comes larger processor requirements (Pentium III 1000 MHz or G4 733 MHz recommended). Reaktor, as deep as it is, may just be more than you need. That's where Absynth 2 comes in. A combination synthesizer and sampler with more intuitive functions that still allows for a lot of manipulation, customization and play, Absynth simply makes more sense for the average user. Absynth's semi-modular synthesis engine combines traditional sampling, granular sampling (for time-stretching), subtractive synthesis, FM synthesis, ring modulation and wave-shaping (waveforms can be drawn by hand or created by sketching harmonics). The patch window makes it easy to mix these disparate sources. A built-in library of waveforms, envelopes and oscillator channels allows the user to create original, unusual patches quickly, without confusion and unnecessary complexity. Less stringent hardware needs, a lower retail price than Reaktor plus more immediate functions means Absynth is all you need to roll with. *Rob Riddle a.k.a. Nada of Hand of None Sound Environments*

Native Instruments Reaktor 4, MSRP: \$499, Native Instruments Absynth 2, MSRP: \$299, www.nativeinstruments.de



BOATLOADS OF FUN

Casio aren't joking when they say the **Casio WK-3500 Keyboard** is full-sized; it would be difficult to escape noticing the instrument, whose titanic dimensions alone are enough to garner a review. Then again, nearly everything on Casio's most powerful keyboard conjures up synonyms of the word "large." It's 516 different tones (including 50 extra drawbar organ tones), floppy drive that saves up to six layers of music, pitch bend and MIDI compatibility, and assignable sustain pedal are enough to entice anyone into buying the product. Casio has also one-upped this batch of features by adding a mixer function, one-touch effect presets like chorus and reverb that enhance existing sounds, and the ability to download extra ones from computer to keyboard. The latter function is probably the WK-3500's most important feature. It means you'll never have to bother with remembering chord progressions again when it comes time to write that tune that'll make you famous. And—not to be forgotten—the sound itself, which when turned to full volume has the ability to jar your headphones and cause premature deafness while still managing to sound good. Still, it begs the question: does WK-3500, with all its tricks, make the electronic keyboard world a better place? Perhaps, though this depends entirely on whether or not you can fit the thing through your front door. *Jenn Marston*

Casio WK-3500 Keyboard, MSRP: \$299, www.casio.com



>> IT MEANS YOU'LL NEVER HAVE TO BOTHER WITH REMEMBERING CHORD PROGRESSIONS AGAIN WHEN IT COMES TIME TO WRITE THAT TUNE THAT'LL MAKE YOU FAMOUS.

THE STR8 DOPE

Stanton turntables are well known for their durability, especially among scratch enthusiasts such as DJs Craze, Faust, Radar or Z-Trip—who likely work their decks

harder than your average DJ. So it comes as no surprise that

Stanton Magnetics's latest turntable upgrades in the **ST-150/STR8-150** models make them seem like they could withstand a lot of abuse while still delivering high quality audio—and provide a viable alternative to the new digital turntables from Technics and Numark.

Besides cool features such as the choice of using phono or line level output and Key Correction (a way to change the pitch without affecting vocals and melodies), the STR8-150 also has a S/PDIF digital output to plug directly into a computer sound card or onto a CD-R; reverse play function (a nice standard on Stanton decks); and the ability to pitch up/down by as much as 50 percent.

One drawback though, like Chuck D's Uzi, they weigh what seems like a ton. That's thanks to the base being solid steel; the unit is finished with sleek gray or green enamel and few distracting knobs. The base and thick platter sit atop massively thick rubber on all four corners, so your records aren't going anywhere, even if there's an earthquake.

But most impressive is the super high torque, the "world's strongest motor" at 4.5 kg. per square cm. In other words, you have the ability to start and stop on a dime, literally, and you can control the level of starting and braking speed. The STR8-150 is the most responsive turntable I've ever used (nearly three times as strong as the motor on the Technics 1210) and truly makes the DJ experience an enjoyable one, especially because of its simple, no-frills interface. While it may take some time to adjust to the feel of the Stanton, there's no question that this is an impressive turntable. *Tim Pratt*

Stanton STR8-150 Turntable, MSRP: \$499, www.stantonmagnetics.com



QUICKIE

MOTOROLA C350 GSM PHONE

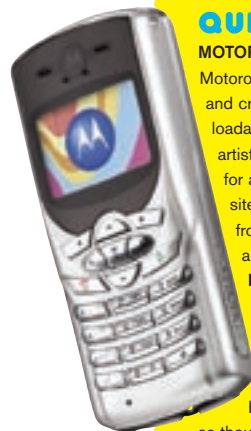
Motorola has teamed up with a few of the DJ elite and created a polyphonic mobile phone with downloadable ringtones that come courtesy of the artists. For anyone skeptical about paying \$3.00 for a twenty-second ringtone, the company's website also contains the Motomixer, where anything from Latin jazz to breakbeat can be customized and downloaded.

PROS: Light, compact device that rests easy in the palm or pocket, fairly intricate intertwining of sounds, decent collection of available downloads.

CONS: At three bones a ringtone, you'd better love Paul Van Dyk, even when it sounds as though he's dropped his sampler into a large can.

MSRP: \$179

www.hellomoto.com



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- LONGWAVE
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- MASTODON
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